I Can't Give
Him Up...

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I Can't Give Him Up...

By RainyDayGirl

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Chapter 1

I Can't Give Him Up... - [Sequel To I Want Him Back]

[Okay, I have thunked it through. I know I said it would be a while until I uploaded. Unfortunately, I have less of a life than I thought I would. Sad, isn't it? I can't believe the reads I got on the last part! I was 'Ohmigahhh'ing. It was spectacular, really! Thanks for the comments. I thought I would put the next part up, the one from Keith's point of view. So you can see what it's been like for him since he 'left'. Happy reading! ^_^]

Her green eyes were the last thing he saw before the dark swallowed him. When light finally reached him again, he was cold and everywhere he looked was unfamiliar. There were small things he thought he

recognised - a merry-go-round, a house, a pool - but they were in odd places. His senses were raw and sharp, making him flinch at the smallest of noises. He looked further afield, trying to see where he was.

Just as he thought, he was no longer in that park with Belinda and Andrew. He only prayed that wherever he was, Belinda and Andrew were separated. He couldn't bear it if everything was for nothing, if she had to suffer unnecessarily. But there was no way to be sure. He had no idea how long he had been asleep - it could have been an hour, it could have been a week - but he knew he was in the other dimension. The last thing he remembered before her eyes was the blinding light from the portal.

And now...well, he would be lucky to get out of here now. He had no ingredients, no spell book...he might as well be dead now! He knew he had to get back, to see Belinda if nothing else. To make sure she was okay, to protect her from the rest of life...Wait, no, he had to get back to make sure he hadn't totally wrecked her life. He had to help her onto her feet

again and then go to the next damsel in distress. That was his job.

And yet, instead of focusing on Maggie, or his mother, it was Belinda he thought of, Belinda he sought out. Her light was brighter in his head than anyone else's, a blazing beacon of brilliance that blinded him with purity. Her face was so easy to picture, something he could almost grab hold of and keep. And the rest of her was easy to imagine: gentle curves that showed her slightness, fragile stature that belied her stubbornness.

And, slowly but surely, the world shimmered around him. She was standing in a kitchen, red hair loose about her shoulders. It must have been early morning or late night - she was wearing pyjamas, her short and cami-top set leaving little to the imagination. He felt like a peeping tom, watching her from the shadows. He could still see the world he was in, but she was the focus of his attention.

She looked at him, confused. He could see in the mirror, as she leaned close to something that looked like a smudge in the- oh. That was him. He didn't look

a lot like himself so he concentrated a little more, trying to force his presence into his shape. It took a lot of effort and he could see the shock on her face. She was holding a glass of orange juice - but only for a moment. The next, it was crashing to the floor and she was sinking, as though her legs couldn't support her.

"Belinda," he whispered, relieved to see that she was okay. Better than okay...she looked fantastic. "Belinda, what's going on? Where are you? Is everything okay? What's the date? Are you-"

The look of frustration on her face was enough to make it clear that she couldn't hear him. She looked so tormented, so- so unhappy that he couldn't help but go to her. He was reaching for her face, wanting to touch her - just touch her...maybe kiss her...he didn't know. He just wanted to know that it was real, that she was really okay - when a strand of hair fell into her face. He was annoyed with it, wanting to brush it away. But she was reaching for his hand, they were only seconds away and his heart was

beating like a bat's wings, trying to free itself from the cage his chest was.

But then her hand went through him. Her eyes went wide with horror and even if he couldn't hear her, he knew she was screaming. Her chest was shuddering, tears spilling from those beautiful green eyes. It cut him like a knife, knowing that he had caused that pain, knowing that he was the one who was making her cry. He had to leave, try to stop the heartbreaking torment so plain in her eyes.

Even as he disappeared, he could still see her. He tried to leave more quickly but part of him lingered, trying to stay with her. Part of him knew that if he left now, he would never get the courage to come back again. But he couldn't cause her pain like this, not knowing that was all he was doing. And somebody was talking, saying her name, again and again- oh, wait, that was him again.

With sheer will power, he forced himself to stop saying her name. He refused to let himself think of her again, of that vibrant person who made him feel like more of a teenager than he had ever thought

possible before. He had always been distant, controlled, calculating, like his mother. But Belinda...she made him feel like spontaneity might not be such a bad thing. She made him want to run, shout, love...

No, he thought vehemently. You will not think of her. She's happier without the spontaneous visits, the sudden shock. You messed her up once - don't do it again. It's not fair on her or you. Sadly, he listened to the voice. He would just have to hope that his mother or Maggie would manage to send someone after him. Someone who could get him out without getting hurt.

Chapter 2

I Can't Give Him Up... - Part 2

[Hiya again! More Keith point of view again. Just so you can know some of their conversation, that time with the grey room-but-not-a-room-actually. Yeah. ^_^. Got a bit of writer's block so I'm having trouble with the part after this so don't expect it any time soon. Happy Reading! ^_^]

He spent the next few weeks like that. Avoiding the memories. But everything he did reminded him of home, of everything he was missing. Occasionally, he thought of Maggie, just to check up on her, but didn't go any further. He just wanted to know she was safe. More often than not, Maggie was with Belinda, and they were smiling together, the way friends do. It

made him glad to know she was happier, content even.

And once, he had been thinking of Maggie, watching her and he had felt the draw of her. He could feel the warmth she radiated, and he couldn't help but go to her. He knew it was wrong but he wouldn't become visible. It wasn't unreasonable to want to see her, was it? Surely he hadn't messed up so badly that he couldn't look at her, had he?

Even as he was trying to justify it, he was drifting into the room she slept in. Her eyes were drifting closed and she sighed. It sounded almost...longing, her brow knitting together as her mind barrelling down a new train of thought. He wished he could know what she was thinking about, just so he could know whether it was him she missed. He sat next to her, an arm on either side. For balance, he told himself.

But he couldn't explain why he lay down next to her, burying his head in her neck. That was purely because he wanted her, with an intensity that burned almost as brightly as she did. He could tell when she

started crying - softly, not great big sobs, like last time - and he tried to press her closer to him, trying to smother those tears. He could tell she was drifting to sleep, that the tears were slowing, stopping.

Even as he pulled away from her, he could feel something wrong with her. She was heating up more than she should, even if she was like a flame to him. It felt all wrong to him, as though she really did have a flame inside of her, burning her from the inside out. And that worry for her was all he needed to keep him there with her. He could see her tossing and turning, all night, the occasional shiver passing through her.

When she tried to make her way out of the room in the morning, he almost had a heart attack. She was swaying all over the place, her small body in so much danger of damage. He was more afraid for her when she lay down on the sofa, her breath coming faster, in pained gasps. He was so desperate to talk to her, desperate to hear her voice...

And the next moment, he was sitting in a grey- it wasn't a room. It was much to vast to be a room. But

Belinda was there, lying down, looking at him. He heard something catch in her throat and it took everything he had not to leap on her. His arms twitched towards her though, and she was trying to choke past whatever was in her throat. He could feel his body melting at her heat, his face softening. He wanted to hold her so badly, touch her, know she was really there, with him.

"Belinda," he whispered in a voice that made it sound like a prayer to him. His hands were moving on their own, wanting to pull her nearer. But apparently he could only talk to her - his hands went straight through that frail and ill body. He immediately pulled them away, not wanting to make her scream again. Even so, she was crying, soft whimpers as she curled into a tiny ball.

It was killing him, not being able to hold her, comfort her. She needed him and he was next to useless, not even able to give her a shoulder to cry on. And then she was trying to smile at him, the corners of her mouth making her look relieved. He leaned toward her then, not touching her, but close enough that had

they both been solid, would have sent electricity shooting down his body.

"Belinda, I don't know how long this will last. We have a lot to talk about and-"

"Keith, where the hell are you?!?" Belinda interrupted, her voice high and afraid. "What's going on? Why aren't you coming back?"

"Belinda, I would be there if I could, I swear. I- look, I'm stuck where I sent Andrew. I think he's here too but I need you to get someone to send help. Talk to Maggie and my mum, let them know I'm okay and then get mum to send help. It's way important that you do this Belinda."

"Can't I come and get you? It can't be that difficult to-"

"NO!!!" he roared, making her jump. He felt so angry, so scared, that he couldn't help but yell at her. It was imperative that she never see this world, never enter such a desolate place - never see what he was suffering through. A silence stretched between them, awkward and charged.

"So...you're not- not dead, are you?" Belinda said in a small voice, changing the subject. The anguish was so evident, so real that it was almost palpable. He had to stop his hand from pulling her to him. He knew it wouldn't work and yet...his hand wanted to touch that soft skin, feel her shiver under his touch. He wanted to crush her mouth to his, taste her and-

"Of course I'm not dead!" he said roughly, not letting his mind wander down such dangerous avenues with no sort of outlet. Even as he tried not to, he could tell he was going anyway. The thought of kissing her, yielding to what he wanted...

"Oh, thank God," she sobbed, leaning back again. He could see the colour returning to her cheeks, the sheen of a cold sweat leaving. It was such a relief to see her looking better. Was this what was bothering her? Was it because she thought he was dead?

"Listen, I was reading this diary I found," Belinda began, telling him everything she had read. Slowly, she began to explain that she thought it was one of his ancestors and she saw him raise an eyebrow. She

blushed but barrelled on, to explain the mini vision that she thought might have been someone else's.

"Okay, well visions sound like Maggie. And if it was about something bad and you were being warned, I would definitely say Maggie. The diary...Well, if you don't have a name, I can't be sure. But the name Joseph sounds familiar. So, probably."

"So...you're a Wiccan?"

"Yeah, I am. Why, does that weird you out?"

"Nah, it actually sort of makes sense. I just wasn't sure how I could ask anyone. I mean, Maggie didn't tell me when she had that vision, or why she sent it to me. It's confusing and I don't really want to think about it. But...I miss you Keith. Why can't you get back? If you're Wiccan-"

"Being Wiccan means nothing if you don't have the spell. And I'm a little short on the ingredients too. But if someone could get over here and take me back, I would be very happy to come back."

Too soon, Belinda was fading away, going in and out of focus. Keith couldn't keep the place together. He

had to say goodbye and that hurt worse than the first time he had been forced to leave. Belinda looked like she knew what was happening, her eyes sad and round. He wished - desperately - that he could just touch her, let her know he was missing her. It just wasn't something he could say.

And then everything dissolved, the grey world disappearing, leaving him alone in the genies' world.

Chapter 3

I Can't Give Him Up... - Part 3

[Woohoo! Found this fellow wattpadder, melisrowe, and she had some awesome ideas to write about. I really want to read her stories so can people comment so she doesn't give up on them? Awesome (sauce)! Lolage, longer piece this time, so I hope you enjoy it! Happy Reading! ^_^]

Belinda squeezed Jack's hand tightly as the portal behind them vanished. The new world was gloomy - and big. It's sheer vastness terrified Belinda. How long would it take to find him? Would they find him? Or would they just wander around helplessly, until one of the genies decided to pick them off? She stifled a sob and Jack squeezed her hand again.

"Look, we'll find him, okay? It's not impossible - he's found you before, right?"

Belinda breathed in deeply, leaning on Jack's arm for support. He always knew what to say, always knew what was bothering her. Sometimes, she wondered whether it bothered him, this unbelievable connection they had, or if he enjoyed it as much as she did. Other times, she was just grateful he hadn't abandoned her the minute she said 'genie'.

Eventually, they started moving, both of them searching for any sign of Keith. It might take days to find him - it might take weeks. But Belinda was determined not to give up, not to leave him behind. Jack was every bit as anxious but he was better at covering it. He could be cool as a cucumber if he wanted to, though he was always himself. It made it easier for her to talk about things.

Jack couldn't believe he was actually walking around this strange world, that they had conjured up with a portal, no less. He'd never really believed in the supernatural, never thought that other beings could exist in secret. And now...Belinda had made it

blatantly clear that he was being blind when he thought nothing but the ordinary was real. And to think! He'd been hanging out with one of those 'secret beings' since he was four!

"Keith!!!" He called out, cupping his hands around his mouth to amplify the sound. "Keith, come out!!! We've come to take you home!!!"

Belinda started mimicking him, her voice high next to his, a squeak compared to the rough bark. And she could hear - things - moving. She knew it couldn't be Keith making those awful noises but it scared her, enough that she almost stopped calling out. It terrified her that it couldn't be helped. It terrified her more that he hadn't heard them yet. Would he be able to hear them? Was he too far away and all they were doing was calling attention to themselves?

* * *

That was how they spent the next few - days? Belinda thought it was days, but she couldn't be sure. She didn't need to sleep, eat, anything. It was like...being in a dream itself. Sometimes, she thought she was asleep, wandering in a nightmare. It might have been

easier to accept, in a way. But she wasn't about to give up, not after everything she had needed to do to even get here.

"Keith!!!" she called out again, her voice much less hoarse than Jack's. The thought of Keith was all that kept her going, up that blasted hill. Jack's hand in hers was another support, driving her through. "Keith!!!"

Finally, Jack helped drag her over the hill, both of them searching. Part of her was scared that they would never find him, part of her dreading that when they did, he would hate her. Maybe he did hate her, maybe that was why he had told her not to come, maybe-

And then she saw him, just like he was in her last 'dream'. She was crying as she flung herself to him, sobbing his name.

* * *

"Keith!!!"

Keith's ears perked up at the sound. It was distant but he was sure it was a familiar voice. In fact, he was

almost positive it was Belinda's. But he had told Belinda - rather vehemently - not to come after him. She couldn't possibly have ignored him, couldn't possibly be-

"Keith!!!"

Dammit! I can't believe she ignored me! Is she insane...? Keith felt frustrated and - at the same time - desperate. If she was here, with him, he could touch her, hold her. It wouldn't be like those halfway things, she would be there, with him. And he couldn't think of anything that would stop him from that. And then he saw them, coming over the crest of a hill.

His stomach plummeted and he almost turned away - he only kept looking because he couldn't quite believe it. She had brought Jack with her. Jack, his best friend, who he had thought would never need to know what he was. He must know now, he thought bitterly, trying not to notice how close they were standing. Trying not to see their hands, clasped together.

"Keith!" Belinda called out, her voice breaking as she saw him. It was really him! He was here, he was

okay! She dropped Jack's hand and threw herself at Keith and wrapped her arms around his waist. She was sobbing, her body shaking. Jack came at a slower pace, being more wary of whatever might be lurking in the shadows.

"Hey man, how's it going?" Jack called, his voice easy. He seemed to be so calm, something Belinda was anything but. She knew he was just being like that, trying to kill the tension, but it didn't help her in the slightest. She was still burying herself in Keith's arms, trying not to let him go - not to let him let her go.

Jack could see, in that moment, that he had had no clue how much Belinda had really missed Keith. Nothing had let on just how much she felt, not even to Jack. She had obviously been scared that she would never see him again. And the thought had been enough to freeze everything inside of her, to make her stop thinking like this.

And Keith was holding her indifferently, his face betraying nothing of what he was feeling inside. Jack had never been able to get a very good read on him but he had always hoped that they would eventually

know what was going on instantly. Like with Belinda, he thought suddenly. Everything that he was with Belinda, he wanted to be with Keith. And everything Keith was being right now, he hated.

Belinda was so relieved to hold Keith, to be near him, that she didn't notice the tension. She just wanted to go home now, get back to safety. She let go of him suddenly, tugging on his wrist.

"We have to go! Maggie's waiting for us to give the signal to let us back! Come on Keith, you've been gone too long already, let's go home."

"Yeah, I have," he muttered, shaking her hand off of his wrist. He didn't want her to touch him if she was with Jack. It was taking everything in him not to sweep her into his arms and say 'MINE'. When she touched him, that electricity he had missed so much seemed like agony. She was everything he had thought about since he had been stuck in this hell hole - and she was already with someone.

Belinda was hurt when he shook her off but she tried not to let it show. She had known it wouldn't be the same with him, not since it was her fault that he had

been stuck here. But she had been hoping. He had come to see her, talked to her. He had seemed to even be missing her. But that was obviously all in her head.

"Hey come on," Jack said, breaking the awkward silence. "We really better get moving. I don't know how long we've been here." He turned to Keith as Belinda started walking in the direction she had come in, dazedly. "It's good to see you man, really. You don't know how much everyone's missed you."

"Yeah, I know," Keith said, trying not to let the betrayal he felt show in his voice. He'd never told Jack what was going on. That made it his fault that Jack was with Belinda, his fault that nothing had gone right. He had no right to be jealous of him, no right to want to beat Jack over the head with something heavy.

Slowly, they made their way forward in silence. Belinda looked worried about something, her teeth sinking into her bottom lip. Jack caught hold of her hand, as though it was normal, pulling her around. He looked concerned, his other hand tilting her chin

up. He'd better not kiss her, Keith thought, angry with himself. He wouldn't be able to stop himself from doing something stupid if Jack kissed her.

"...it's nothing, honest. I just want to be back. I need to check that mum's okay and Maggie's probably bored stuck in the house. Can we just get going?"

"Fine," Jack muttered, not happy that Belinda wasn't being totally honest. He didn't like it when Belinda didn't tell him everything, when she was unhappy. And he didn't like the way Keith was being with her - distant. It was obvious that she had missed him enough for the both of them - Jack had assumed that Keith missed her a little. He'd been watching over her before he left, for crying out loud! And now he was cool as could be, not even making an effort to seem like he cared.

Keith walked silently behind them both, trying to think of something to break the tension. But all he could think of was the way Belinda was clinging to Jack's hand, the way Jack was able to stand beside her without pulling her into a hug. Keith wasn't sure he'd be able to do that, not when they were

somewhere so obviously dangerous. Keith would want to know she was safe every second that they were there.

But he tried not to let them see what seeing them together was like for him. He would give anything for Belinda to be happy, even if it was with Jack. And she certainly seemed better, her eyes brighter. Hell, she was even smiling, a little. Whatever it was that had happened since he left, Keith knew it had to happen. However badly he wanted her, however much he craved those lips, he was going to put her first.

Chapter 4

I Can't Give Him Up... - Part 4

[Short part this time! Hope more people comment soon. I'm starting to feel like I'm losing my touch! Seriously O_o. Comment as MUCH as you like, I swear nothing bad will come of it. Happy Reading! ^_^]

"So how did you both get here? I think you said something about Maggie..."

"Yeah," Belinda replied. "Long story short, Gina said we could come if we had Mags the other end, letting us back in. Took a bit of convincing though-"

"And I take it mum didn't know that I told you to get someone else to come instead," Keith said coldly, getting angry with her again. Really, it was stupid. He

could understand if she'd been so out of her mind with worry that she couldn't help but come. But to come because she felt guilty? That was stupid. "And why the hell didn't you listen? I thought you were at least a little smarter than tha-"

"Okay, knock it off Keith. Would you quit bitching? Belinda was worried, she came to get you, she's here, get over it. It's not like she had much of a choice. Your mum said she wanted you home soon as, Belinda was the quickest way. So could you stop being an ass and-"

It's okay Jack," Belinda said quietly. Keith let his gaze flicker over her before meeting her eyes. "Look, I'm sorry I came. It was obviously a bad idea. But don't act like I'm the only one making the mistakes. I think it's only fair that I ignore what you want every once in a while, considering."

Keith flushed, turning away from her as she stalked away. He hadn't thought she would bring that up on him, had assumed he'd already been forgiven. It had been idiotic to be so presumptuous but...hadn't he gone through enough? Did she need to fling more salt

on the still raw wound? But he had heard the blankness of her voice, the way she seemed so...mechanical. What was wrong? She couldn't be upset with what he said, could she?

"Belinda, wait," he began, catching her upper-arm. She spun to face him, her eyes dark and shadowed. He hadn't noticed last time but it didn't look like she had gotten much sleep. She wouldn't have needed it here, so it must have been before that. He leaned close to her, desperate to make sure that Jack (a decent distance behind them) wouldn't hear him. "I'm sorry, okay? I didn't mean it. It's just..."

"Just what? That you didn't expect me? Or you were hoping for someone else? Well sorry, looks like you drew the short straw - you're stuck with me. I don't care if it is a disappointment. Now we really have to get moving. I-I've got a bad feeling about this."

"What, so you're pre-cog now?" Keith said gently, trying to lighten the mood again. She was looking up at him, eyes so distrustful...his hand just automatically brushed her cheek, trying to magic a

smile out. "Come on, I'm just...anxious. I've been more than a little worried, about everything."

Belinda looked up into his eyes, trying to see if he meant it. She was no great shakes at reading people - especially guys - but she wanted to be able to tell what he was thinking. She may enjoy the spice his spontaneity gave her when he kissed her, but his mood swings were giving her serious whip lash. Whenever she thought she had him sussed, he changed completely.

"Tell me, is Mr. Hyde coming back sometime soon? I don't like him very much."

Keith jumped when he heard Jack chuckle behind them. He pulled his hand back, quicker than he had believed possible. It was okay to be friends with your best friend's girlfriend. It was most definitely not okay to be intimate - no matter how innocent the intentions - with your best friend's girlfriend. He felt guilty for not wanting Jack to interrupt.

"Hey, can we get going now? If, you know, you're done flirting..."

"It's not- We weren't- Shut it Jack," Keith spluttered, whilst Belinda went red. He deliberately put some distance between himself and Belinda now, trying to rid himself of the guilt. How could Jack be so...so calm about everything?

Even as he was thinking it, he could see Belinda rolling her eyes, chatting and smiling with Jack. This was going to be harder than he thought it would be. But even as she was smiling she was letting her gaze dart anywhere and everywhere, taking in as much as possible. Something really must be bothering her...

Keith shrugged the thought off, following them. It was a mistake he wouldn't forget.

Chapter 5

I Can't Give Him Up... - Part 5

[Woot, second part today! Yayness for boredom. Happy Reading! Comment lots, like it or not! ^_^]

"Can't we hurry up a little?" Belinda asked, the shivery feeling in her stomach still threatening that tranquil feeling she had been trying to construct. She knew she wasn't fooling either Jack or Keith, but it was easier to pretend she was if she was trying. "I have a really bad feeling, and it's not going away."

"We're trying Bel, honest," Jack replied gently, trying to soothe her frazzled nerves. "It's just...we've got to make sure we're going in the right direction. If we

just rush off, how're we going to be sure we haven't just rushed off in the wrong direction?"

"I know that Jack," Belinda snapped impatiently. "It's not that it's the whole place giving me the creeps. Just here," she indicated, sweeping her arms in a circle around her. "I know we'll be fine if we get out of here."

Keith looked at her surprised. She wasn't Wiccan, he knew that. But...was she right? Was there some immediate danger he wasn't paying attention to? Or was she just paranoid? It was possible that she thought he was dangerous and hadn't realised it. The body could do strange things without the mind even knowing 'how', much less 'why'. The thought of her being afraid of him was disheartening, more so than everything else so far. Jack he could compete with (if he had to). Mistakes he could make up for (with time). But fear? Was that even remotely curable? Or-

Crash!

Belinda screamed, launching herself to the side, landing on an unprepared Keith. The surprise, topped with the electric shock she always gave him,

was too much to handle. He yelped, his legs giving way beneath him. His arms went around her instinctively, not wanting to drop her, and he could feel her heart beating erratically. Well, he thought mildly. She might be a little afraid, but obviously not too terrified.

Seconds later, she rolled out of his arms, looking around alertly. They were sitting up, staring at the space where Jack had been. There stood a tall young man (or, at least, it looked like a person to Belinda) with dark eyes and hair, smirking. He no longer held the facade of humanity, of pretending to love Belinda. And his true face was scarier than anything she had ever imagined.

"Why, hello Belinda!" Andrew said, almost pleasantly as he stepped closer to them. "Funny seeing you here! Have you had a change of heart since you shoved me ruthlessly back in here? Or are you still hoping that prince charming over there will help you?"

"What have you done to Jack?" Belinda demanded - or at least, tried to. It sounded like more of a squeak

than anything else. She flushed and tried again. "I swear to God, if you've hurt him-"

"Oh my," Andrew tutted, his eyes falling upon Keith maliciously. "Don't tell me she ditched you too! And after everything you went through..."

"It's not like that!" Belinda and Keith said simultaneously. Belinda blushed again, looking away before turning back to Andrew with narrowed eyes. "Seriously Andrew, you don't want to piss me off right now. Give him back."

"Oh? And what exactly, my small and very non-threatening ex-girlfriend, are you going to do?"

Belinda fell silent, wishing she was powerful like Maggie or Keith. She hated being powerless, so unable to do something - anything - for the one person who understood her. What she wouldn't give for Keith's unpredictability, Maggie's visions, Gina's raw power for but this one moment.

"It's not very difficult to undermine her will power, is it Keith? I mean, I'm sure you took advantage of that particular-" Andrew searched for the right word "-

virtue. I mean, I liked that she was so Goddamn gullible, but I suppose it must've been nice to know you could make her do whatever you wanted. She may not be the prettiest flower but you know what they say - a bird in the hand..."

Keith went white with rage. How dare he make fun of him? It was none of his business what happened with Belinda. He should have killed him instead of trying to send him here, should have ripped off his head when he had the chan-

"Now, now, that's just not very nice Keith." Andrew shook his head in disapproval, smiling manically at him. He took a step closer. "You wouldn't like it very much if I told her what you were thinking, would you?" He took another step, his voice dropping dramatically. "Or Jack for that matter. Do you think he'd like to know what you think of his new girlfriend?"

"Shut the hell up," Keith growled, fists clenched. His eyes threw a furtive glance in Belinda's direction. "And get the hell out of my head while you're at it."

"Oh, but it's so interesting in here. You know, I could browse through your mind all day. And then I could tell your little friends everything they've never known about you. For example, Belinda," Andrew called out, turning his head in her direction slightly. "Did you know, Keith here used to get bullied? Or that he used his powers against those bullies? Poor, unsuspecting children who couldn't defend themselves."

"It's not like I knew exactly what I was doing," Keith defended himself. "I was a kid myself! It was just payback."

"Look, this isn't the time for this crap!" Belinda shrieked, throwing a despairing glance at Keith. "Where the hell is Jack?! You give him back right this second! He never did anything to you!"

"But I have so much leverage if I have him."

"Please! You don't understand, people will miss him if you take him."

"But I'm so hungry Belinda," Andrew said, a vicious smile rolling across his face. "After you rejected me

so cruelly, I haven't had a bite to eat. And he has such a pure soul."

Belinda bit back the tears, refusing to let Andrew see her cry. She didn't feel right, not knowing if Jack was safe. Jack had to be safe. It was a feeling she couldn't control, fear and desperation jumbling inside of her. She took an involuntary step forward, torn between rushing Andrew and running away. If she rushed Andrew, he would catch her. Even with the slim chance that she caught him off-guard, he would realise what she was doing before she could do any damage.

"Very true Belinda, very true. You'll never be able to get the drop on me, though. Not so long as you still have something that resembles thoughts in that airy excuse for a head."

"Sod off!" Belinda hissed vehemently. "If you want a soul, come and get it! You're not touching Jack."

"Belinda, no!" Keith shouted, trying to step forward. But something was holding him back. He glared at Andrew, trying to break free of the invisible hold he had on him. "Let go of me, you ass!"

And then, suddenly, Keith was free. He jerked forward, landing on his side in front of Belinda. He leaped into a standing position before he realised that Andrew was no longer standing in front of him.

Chapter 6

I Can't Give Him Up... - Part 6

[Dum dum duuuuum! Heh, hope you're not all too mad at me for leaving there. It was pretty mean, I know. But hey, I've gotta keep your interest somehow! Thanks xBlackVendettax (I think you're name's Vicky - sorry if I'm wrong, please feel free to correct me!) for commenting on my last piece, and Stargazer for the comments before! Keep the comments coming and let me know what you think Happy Reading ^_^!]

Keith looked around wildly, trying desperately to see where Andrew had gone. He wasn't anywhere that Keith could see and every second of uncertainty

made him more afraid. Belinda was trying to push past him and he was doing his best not to let her go.

"Jack!"

Wait, what? Keith thought dumbly. And then he looked at where Andrew had been standing. Crumpled in a heap on the floor was Andrew and standing above him was Jack, holding a rather large piece of wood. He gaped at Jack, who was breathing heavily. Jack dropped the stick and rushed forward, panting for breath.

"We...have to...get...out of here! Come...on!"

"Keith, move it!" Belinda shrieked, grabbing his hand again. He followed, both a little dazed and dumb. "Keith!"

"Forget it, come on Belinda," Jack said, grabbing Keith's hand himself, and dragging him rather more forcefully and quickly than Belinda could. Keith soon snapped out of the daze and began really running with them, trying not to get out of breath. He didn't quite understand what had just happened but he at least grasped that whilst the immediate danger was

otherwise incapacitated, they should try to put as much distance between themselves and it as possible.

A while later, when Belinda tripped for the third time, Keith decided it was enough distance for the time being. He collapsed on the floor next to her, panting wildly, looking p at Jack who was doubled over and wheezing. Evidently, Keith owed Jack a rather large debt of gratitude, but right then, he felt as though he was already paying it. Belinda was hugging Jack tightly, refusing to let him go.

"Bel...I'm okay...honest..."

"I know! I'm just so relieved! What the hell happened?"

"When you screamed, I was already looking up. And then he - was that Andrew? Jesus! I mean, you never told me he was that creepy!"

"I never knew he was that creepy," Belinda muttered, rolling her eyes. "Besides, that's not the point! I thought he had you!"

"Nah, I rolled out of the way. Not as cool as it sounds, actually," he admitted, wincing. "Did you know there was a pile of rocks not too far from us? Yeah, neither did I."

Belinda laughed, squeezing him tighter. She was so relieved he was okay, so happy that they'd escaped from Andrew that she was giddy. She tottered back over to Keith, crumpling in a fit of giggles next to him. Keith and Jack exchanged concerned glances before they both broke into smiles as well. They couldn't help it - her good mood was contagious.

"Hey, we'd better get moving again," Belinda said a little while later. "I don't really want him to catch up. And Maggie will probably be getting really bored now."

"Okay, okay," Jack and Keith conceded, Jack taking the lead again. Belinda walked alongside Keith, her tension completely gone. She was smiling again, a slightly triumphant look in the way her mouth tilted upwards. She was still a little jumpy (every time she thought she heard a noise, she would jump up and

grab Keith's arm) but she seemed to feel better now that the immediate danger was gone.

When they finally reached somewhere that looked a little familiar to Belinda, she was getting another 'bad feeling'. She clutched Keith's hand this time, shuddering as they passed the swimming pool again. She tried to put as much distance between her and it but she still didn't like the way the water was stirring. Can pool water even stir? she thought uneasily. Her grip on Keith's hand tightened.

"Keith, can we swap places? I- I can't swim."

"It's not like you're going in-"

"Please!" she interrupted, her voice going high with stress. "Just, please, Keith, swap places with me! I-"

Belinda was cut off abruptly as Andrew appeared in front of them again. Belinda whimpered, her hand squeezing Keith's so tightly it went slightly numb. Not that he really noticed. Andrew looked slightly annoyed but, for the most part, at ease. He flicked a casual glance at Jack before turning back to Keith and Belinda.

"Now, that was rude," he said breezily. "I do believe I wasn't done talking to you. And I didn't much appreciate the bruise. Jack, I presume," he said, turning back to look at Jack properly. "Honestly, I don't get why you didn't run when you had the chance." There was a slight pause and then Andrew laughed. "Oh, come on! She can't be all that special, now, can she?"

Keith glanced at Belinda before giving all of his attention back to Andrew. He refused to be caught off guard again, refused to let Andrew control him. I fact, he was so absorbed in blocking Andrew from his mind that he didn't notice when Belinda let go of his hand. He did, however, notice the small splash as she fell in the water.

"Belinda!" Jack roared, surging forward, trying to shove past a smirking Andrew. Failing miserably, but trying none the less. "Get her out of there!"

Keith was not as immobile as Jack and wasted no time jumping after her, all other thoughts driven from his mind. He reached for her desperately, trying to call her name. He could hear her crying out,

weakly as she was sucked under. And then, suddenly, he couldn't.

Chapter 7

I Can't Give Him Up... - Part 7

[Okay, so I'm not saying much this time, just warning you that this is not a very happy chapter. I'll give my reasons at the end!]

Belinda sank, the world going white. Strange, she'd always assumed it would be black, an infinite darkness. Maybe she was imagining it. Maybe this was all in her head - maybe this was something - a gift? - from Maggie. She didn't even think it hurt that much. But something was bothering her. Something was tugging at her peace, tearing it apart. She thought she could hear someone calling out to her, pulling at her arm. Did she even still have an arm?

"Belinda, come on!" Keith begged, holding her head above water, she didn't seem to be breathing, her lips - those beautiful red lips - were tinged with blue. He was trying to power to the edge of the pool, trying to make sure she was breathing, trying to do so much that he thought his head would explode. And then Jack was there, pulling them both out of the water.

Keith coughed up a lot of water, clutching his stomach. When he looked up again, Jack was giving Belinda CPR, his hands pumping on her chest ferociously. Even as her lips turned less blue, she didn't awaken. After about three minutes of chest pumping, Belinda started to gag, water trickling out of her mouth. Jack pushed her roughly onto her side, letting the water rush out in a tirade.

"I think she's breathing again!" Jack exclaimed, looking relieved. He was leaning down, right next to her face, listening intently. "But- why isn't she waking up? If she's breathing, shouldn't she wake up?"

"They- they don't always come around straight away Jack," Keith said, cautiously. "Most of the time, you need to take them to hospital. So we have to get

moving, get her out of here. The longer we're here, the worse it'll get."

"Fine, let's go!"

Jack hoisted Belinda into his arms, his eyes burning with determination. He half-ran towards another hill, racing for the crest. Keith kept up with him easily, wondering if he should take Belinda. Not because he didn't like Jack touching her - although that did contribute - but because he was shaking her around a lot. There was a chance that she was brain damaged, from the lack of oxygen, and shaking her around could make it worse.

They reached the top of the hill and Jack looked at Keith intently.

"This is it! This is where we got in. Now we need you to tell Maggie we want to get back in."

Keith looked briefly at Belinda again, biting his lip. He didn't like the idea of leaving them defenceless while he was in that in between thing. Not that he had been much help up to his point, but it went against everything in him to leave Belinda like this.

But he turned away from Jack and Belinda to reach for Maggie. It took a lot more effort than usual to concentrate on Maggie, what with Belinda right there, but he did it somehow.

Maggie was watching a silvery spot across from her. She recognised it instantly, as the smudge Belinda had described to her, not too long ago. She smiled in relief, going into a trance of her own, muttering a spell. Her lips were moving in a blur and Keith let himself phase back into the other world. Jack was looking just past Keith at the portal that was opening there.

Jack and Belinda were the first to come through the portal, Belinda still limp in Jack's arms. He was shouting something, but all Maggie heard was white noise. No, no, no, no, NO! she thought desperately. This isn't meant to happen! They were all meant to come back safe! Keith was coming through now, grabbing at the telephone next to Maggie.

"Hello, nine-one-one, what can I help you with?"

"Help, it's my friend, I think there's something wrong with her! She- she's not waking up, what do we do?

She was drinking some water, sh-she started choking, she collapsed, what to I do?!?!" Keith cried, the anguish in his voice bringing Maggie out of her shock. Well, partially anyway. "No, my friend got her breathing again, but she didn't wake up! What do we do?!"

Ten minutes later, there were sirens going off. The portal was closed and there was a smashed glass of water by the sofa. Keith had done it, to give his story credibility but only because Jack had ordered him to. Maggie had insisted she was the one who knew Belinda best, and she was the one getting in the ambulance with her. Jack and Keith both leapt onto their bicycles, leaving a brief note for Keith's mother.

At the hospital, Maggie was trying to give Belinda's details, looking towards the door of Belinda's room every few minutes. The nurse who was taking the details was being awfully patient, letting Maggie talk at her own pace. When she had all the vital information, she asked if Belinda had an adult they could call, to come and sign paperwork, to give

confirmation that the girl lying on the bed was indeed Belinda Godfrey.

"He-her mum's in here too," Maggie stuttered. "But I can get hold of my mum. She's been staying with us, you know? Just until her mum gets better..."

Keith and Jack burst through the doors then, both frantic to see Belinda. Jack was the one who reached the room first and he sank into the chair next to Belinda's bed. Keith stayed with Maggie, helping to answer the questions Maggie hadn't been able to. It wasn't much, but he tried. Eventually, the nurse let them go to be with Belinda, letting them all into the room at once.

Maggie just started to cry, little sobs until Keith hugged her tight, trying to calm her. This is all my fault, he thought. If only I'd listened to her. She said she didn't want to walk there and I didn't fucking listen! Jack just sat there, staring at Belinda. He looked like he was in so much pain, so torn up by this. Keith felt the guilt double.

Hours later, Gina arrived, taking control of the situation. She embraced Keith briefly before letting

them explain the whole thing. Her eyes sharpened when she heard about Andrew but she let them continue. When they were done, Jack was staring dumbly at Belinda, evidently trying not to cry. Keith barely ever even saw him upset, but to see him cry? That was definitely new.

When visiting hours ended, there was a short argument about who would get to stay with her. Eventually, Gina decided that it would be best if everyone just went home, leave Belinda to rest. Both Maggie and Jack disapproved of the idea, of course, but Gina won in the end. Keith was quiet the whole time, just staring at Belinda. Even when it was time to go, he didn't say a word. Maggie knew him well enough that she kept clinging to his hand, knowing that he needed some support. Keith just held back tightly, numb.

[Okay, I KNOW there are probably a lot of you who wanted her to wake up miraculously. But that sort of stuff just doesn't happen. Okay? So don't be mad. But PLEASE comment. I need to know what you guys think! ^_^]

Chapter 8

I Can't Give Him Up... - Part 8

[I know there are at least two people who want Belinda to wake up. I'm sorry, but it's not happening yet. If at all...;) Let's hope THAT got your attention. Yeah, I'm not sure if she should wake up or not. So, this chapter's more without Belinda! Sorry, but there is GOING to be a reason, I think. Keep commenting and Happy Reading! ^_^]

Keith was sitting in his room, wondering. About all the different things he could have done right. About what it might be like if he hadn't bodged everything so monumentally. Would he be with Belinda? Would she have met Jack? Would she be conscious? Had he

actually done any good in her life? Would she have been happier if Jack had been the Wiccan? What if-

"Keith?" Maggie called, knocking on his door. He scrubbed at his eyes with the back of his hand before granting her entry. She was wearing pyjamas and holding a pillow, fidgeting and looking at her feet. She cleared her throat before continuing. "Could I maybe...would it be okay...can I sleep in here," she blurted out. She took a deep breath, looking at him at last. "It's just...I missed you lots and now Belinda's in the hospital...Mum's got work, so..."

"Sure," Keith said soothingly. "It's fine. Come on, I'll read you a story if you want."

Maggie looked at him sadly, her big brown eyes amazingly deep. He could see the tears trying to form and the effort she was putting in to keep them at bay. He pulled her into a hug, rubbing her back, up and down in what he hoped was a soothing manner.

"It's okay, Maggie, you can cry. She's going to be fine though." She has to be, he added mentally. He hugged her a little tighter before pulling away slightly. "Come

on, what story do you want me to read you? Peter Pan? The Wizard of Oz?"

"I don't know," Maggie said slowly. She seemed to be thinking. "I don't really want a story."

"Something bothering you?" Keith asked, curiosity peaking. "Want to talk about it? Because, you know, better out than in and all that..."

"I-" she began, looking torn again. "I don't know if I can talk to you about it."

"Girl stuff?" Keith said, his nose wrinkling. "Because, you know, mum could probably help you with that."

"Not really girl stuff. More, you know, Belinda stuff."

"Oh." A silence stretched between them as he tried to think of something to say. His curiosity was worse now. Was it something about Belinda? Or was it something Belinda did? Either way, he was dying to know. He just didn't want Maggie to know just how desperately he wanted to know.

She seemed to take pity on him though. "It's just...she was really looking forward to having you home. And

now she's not even awake to see that you are. And then, there's the nightmares...I hope she not having them now. I mean, she's been doing better since she started hanging out with Jack but...I know she hasn't been the same. I think they got better after she knew you were sort of okay though..."

Keith sat in shocked silence. Belinda had missed him. Had had nightmares for him. Sure, she was Jack's, but who knew how long that would last? He hugged Maggie a little closer, humming tunelessly. He was a little ashamed that he was so elated, seeing as Belinda was still a little unconscious, but the feeling just spread through him like a fire, warming him almost as much as she did.

Jack was in his room, fretting. They had only been gone a few days, from what he could tell, which was good because it meant that they hadn't missed any school. But it also meant that Belinda would be missing it soon. That meant that she would fall behind and, considering that they were in their final year of GCSE's, it could mean she didn't get into college. And that was his fault. He shouldn't have

been going ahead of them, should have been with her. Maybe if he had, he could have caught her before she went in. Maybe...

He tried to snap himself out of it, looking on the bright side: Keith was back. And now that Jack knew his Big Secret, maybe Keith would be a little more honest. And when Belinda woke up, she could join in with everything. Even if he did have Keith back, it would be weird if Belinda just faded into the background. It just wouldn't be...right without her.

He thought back to the happiness that had radiated out of her when they had finally found Keith, the way she had lit up so entirely. She had been so alive then that it had been impossible not to notice how she felt. He had to admit that she had done such a good job, not talking about Keith a lot, that he had thought that it was just guilt that made her look for him. Well, he thought, her cover's blown!

And then he thought back to the way Keith had so blatantly ignored her, brushed her aside. He didn't care if Keith was his best friend, he was going to give him a piece of his mind when he next got the

opportunity. But...maybe he should wait until Belinda was recovering. If Jack felt guilty for what had happened, how must Keith have felt, standing right next to her?

Chapter 9

I Can't Give Him Up... - Part 9

[Whoop, I'm on a roll! Not going to talk much, just the usual - comment! And thanks to all the people who've fanned me so far! Happy Reading! ^_^]

"Keith, get up!"

Keith groaned not wanting to get up. He couldn't ignore the pounding on the door though, so he rolled out of his bed and staggered towards the door. He wrenched it open, to find Maggie on the other side. He looked groggily at his clock before turning back to her.

"Mags, it's five o' clock. What the hell?"

"I- I'm used to Belinda being up now, so I woke up. But then I thought I heard something, and I didn't want to be awake on my own. Anyway," she said as casually as she could, still darting glances up and down the hallway. "You've got to be up soon anyway." When he looked at her blankly she rolled her eyes. "School? Or did you forget?"

He had. He groaned again, opening the door wider. He ushered her inside, stifling a yawn. Seriously, five o' clock? How bloody early did Belinda need to get up? He turned his phone on, wondering if it was too early to call the hospital and check if Belinda had woken up yet. He was pondering this when he thought he heard a noise as well. His eyes flickered toward the door and then to Maggie. Her eyes were a little wide as well, which is how he knew he hadn't just imagined it.

He held a finger to his lips as he crept forward and out of his room. He prayed it was his mother, up and about earlier than usual, but he felt the heat gathering near his fingers anyway. He could still hear the noise, and he thought it was coming from the

kitchen. It sounded like whoever was there was rummaging through everything. Keith tried to think - what do we keep in the kitchen?

He slipped his foot into the gap where the door didn't quite meet the frame. His mother evidently hadn't closed it properly, if the person who was in the kitchen hadn't opened the door. Keith doubted it somehow - nobody would go into the kitchen looking for valuables. As he edged the door open, he let the heat in his fingertips flare. Whoever it was, they were about to get a very nasty surprise. He couldn't see anyone but he could definitely hear them. They were rummaging around in the-

"Maggie, did you open a window?" Keith shouted.

"Um," Maggie called back, obviously thinking about it. "I might've done. It was really warm this morning. Why?"

"Because," Keith laughed, "our intruder is a cat. Congratulations, you've managed to get a stray in here. And it's made a mess of the bin. Jeez," he said, turning as she came in. "I suppose you expect me to clean that up, don't you?"

Maggie rushed forward, cooing at the cat. She was great with animals, always trying to get their mother to let them in the house. She let the cat come towards her before meeting it halfway, petting it and tickling it under the chin. She sat there while Keith cleaned up the bin the cat had knocked over. When he was finally done, it was about quarter to six. He decided he might as well have breakfast.

"Whoa!" he exclaimed as the cat started winding its way around his feet. "It better not expect me to feed it," he told Maggie sternly, while she sat there giggling. "You know mum doesn't like having cats in the house."

"Yeah, but..." Maggie said, biting down on her lip. "I'm going to get lonely without Belinda here. Do you think she might, maybe, let me keep her in my room? I'll clean up after her and everything."

"It's not me you've got to convince. But, I suppose you are getting older..."

"And I've got my savings, I could pay for her! I really could, she's only little."

Just then, Gina walked into the kitchen, looking distracted. She stopped when she heard the miaowing, and the little bundle of fur rubbed herself against Gina's legs. She looked pointedly at Maggie before picking the cat up.

"You know what I've said about cats Maggie. Where'd you pick this one up?"

"I didn't pick her up," Maggie cried, reaching for her. "She made her own way here, I swear. Ask Keith, he found her going through our bin! She's only a tiny little thing."

"Maggie..." Gina began tiredly. "You don't know if she belongs to anyone. She could have fleas, worms, anything!"

"Then shouldn't we keep her here, at least until we find the owners? And then if we don't get the owners, I can take her to the RSPCA, couldn't I? Please, mum, please," she whined, eyes round and innocent.

Gina looked like she was considering it, a definite first. Maggie held her breath, not wanting to interrupt her train of thought. Finally, Gina dumped

the cat into Maggie's open hands, making Maggie squeal with happiness. She hugged the tiny creature, racing up the stairs before her mother could change her mind. Keith shook his head, amazed.

"You're in a good mood, aren't you?" he observed, offering up the scrambled eggs and bacon he was making. "You know she's going to find it hard to go to school now, right?"

"Yes," Gina replied heavily. "But I figure I owe her. She's been really good, taking care of Belinda...a cat can't be much harder than taking care of a person, can it? And now that Belinda isn't around...Maggie's bound to get lonely, isn't she?" It was more of a statement than a question. "And it'll be good for her. She's always bothering me about the blasted things. Maybe she'll find the owners..."

Keith just ate, letting her go off into her own world. The moment she had said 'Belinda' everything had gotten dull again, his almost-good mood evaporating instantly. He missed her desperately, even though he hadn't been around to see her before. It just...it was worse knowing they were in the same dimension and

he still couldn't touch her. Even if she'd been awake, he couldn't have touched her but at least then he wouldn't feel so Goddamn guilty.

About an hour later, Maggie came downstairs, grabbing a Pop-Tart and munching it down. She grinned toothily at Keith before rushing to the door. She yelled 'Bye!' before slamming the door and making her way to school. Keith looked at the clock and groaned. He hadn't missed it in the slightest, and now that he was so behind...

He was still grumbling to himself as he checked Maggie's room, to make sure the cat was okay. It was sniffing around the bed, pawing at the teddies and toys. Maggie had lined the floor with newspaper, leaving the cat to run amok as it pleased. He put a bowl of water down for it before he left and then hopped onto his bicycle, making sure all the windows were locked. It wasn't unusual for Maggie to leave them open, but she must have gotten better at making sure they were closed when he wasn't around to close them.

Ten minutes later, sitting with Jack in the courtyard, Keith wondered how he was going to catch up with all of the work. There was so much...he couldn't believe he'd been gone two months. Maybe he could get people to help him, someone different for all subjects. Well, Jack could help in English, Callum could help in Science and...he felt another stab in his gut as he realised that the one person who could help in maths would have been Belinda. Forget about it, he thought desperately. She can't help herself right now! Why the hell are you thinking about school work when she's like that?

"Keith, you okay?"

Keith's head snapped in Jack's direction, startled. He'd forgotten he was there. Normally Jack would be chattering away, nineteen to the dozen. Today he just seemed to be in his own world. His eyes were sad, a little lonely.

"Yeah, I'm fine," Keith muttered, not wanting to think about why Jack was lonely. "I was just thinking about my classes. I can't believe I've got so much to catch up on! It's going to be hel-"

"Ohmygod, Keith! You're back!" Emma called out, bounding over to them. She gave a short smile to Jack, as if acknowledging he was there before turning back to Keith. "It's been, like, so weird since you left! Where the hell did you go? And when did you get back? You really should have called, you know? Everyone's been, like, majorly bummed."

"Uh, yeah. Hi Emma," Keith replied, wondering what on earth he was going to say. He looked to Jack for help but he only shrugged. Great. So he was on his own here. He wished Belinda was here - she always seemed so quick on her feet, always had something smart to say. "I got back sometime last week. Sorry I didn't call, I've just been way busy."

"Jeez Emma, give him some room. Wouldn't want him to disappear again, would you?"

Keith looked at Jack, surprised. Jack was never rude. To anyone. Just what had happened? Did Emma do something? Or was he just upset that Belinda wasn't here? But Emma was giving him a scathing look, rolling her eyes.

"Duh, he's not going to disappear. He's obviously back because he wants to be. Besides, where's your pet? Don't you normally come in with her? Wait, don't tell me, she's 'ill' again. God, she's always attention-seeking."

Jack went white before stalking off. Whoa, Keith thought. Something definitely happened here. He looked at Emma quizzically waiting for her to tell him. She didn't normally have a problem telling him the latest gossip, even when he didn't want to hear it. But just now, she seemed reluctant. Must've been something she did...

"It's nothing major," she muttered, rolling her eyes again. "He's been acting freakish ever since he started hanging out with Belinda Godfrey." She snorted at the name, like it was funny that Jack would hang out with her. His stomach clenched. "I mean, you know what they say about company. You change who you hang with and your whole personality, like, totally changes. Guess she's more of a bad influence than I thought."

"Really? What'd she do?" Keith said, genuinely curious. He wasn't sure if he'd get it straight from Emma, but he could always iron out the details with Jack later. But at least, if Emma told him something, he'd be able to ask about it.

"She's just gotten so cocky! I mean, yeah, sure, Andrew was hanging out with her. But it's, like, totally obvious he ditched her. Because, ever since she went on a date with him, he's not been around. It's weird, the teachers don't even call out his name anymore. But, like I said, everyone's been wondering when you'd get back. We were starting to wonder if you ran off with Andrew," she said giggling.

"Yeah, right," Keith chuckled, uncomfortable that she'd come so close to hitting the mark. "Come on, do I look gay?"

"I don't know, you've never, like, had a girlfriend," she said, leaning forward so she was rubbing his arm. He tried not to jerk away. It was obvious what she was trying to get at and it made him uncomfortable. He waited for her to step away, give him some breathing room. She didn't.

"Yeah, anyway," he said, stepping away and picking up his bag. "I should go catch up with Jack, make sure he's okay. Belinda's actually in hospital at the minute, so, you know, he's a little upset."

"Oh, sure. Just make sure, like, she's not faking whatever she's got. She's like that sometimes."

Kind of hard to fake a coma, he thought before saying, "Yeah, anyway. Catch you later."

He finally caught up with Jack in their tutor room. Jack didn't seem to notice him come in so he tapped his shoulder, bringing him out of whatever thought he was lost in. He gave Keith a half-hearted smile before looking away moodily. It really wasn't like Jack to lose it like that, not with anyone Keith knew. Belinda not being here must have been affecting him more than he already let on.

"Hey, look," Keith said quietly. "Emma's just...Emma. Belinda's going to be okay. It's just going to take some time. I know she's seems like Supergirl sometimes but she's just human. All healing takes time, you know?"

"Man that was cheesy," Jack chuckled, rolling his eyes. "I know she's only human I just...I feel like it's kind of my fault. When she said she was going...there, she never acted like she was scared but I knew she was. I could've come after you on my own but - I guess I was kind of scared too."

"Hey come on, if it's anyone's fault - other than Andrew's - it's mine." Jack looked at him sceptically. "I mean, she told me she didn't want to walk next to the water. She even said she couldn't swim, and I just brushed it off. But it's a little bit more than pointless placing blame, so we just have to wait for her to wake up."

"I guess," Jack muttered, looking away again. Keith clapped him on the shoulder and slung himself into the seat next to Jack.

"This is still my seat, right? I mean, I know I've been gone a while, but you didn't give it away, did you?"

Chapter 10

I Can't Give Him Up... - Part 10

[Ah, a good days work! Here's to Tarakf, who left a comment on my last chapter! Hope this one's both good and long enough to make you shed a tear, at the end. You'll get what I mean when you get there. Remember guys, happy writer = happy ending and the best way to make a writer happy is to let them know what you think of their work. And by happy ending, I mean one that exists XD Happy Reading! ^_^]

Hey, is it okay if I come over before we head to the hospital?" Jack asked. They were sitting at Belinda's table (It just didn't seem right for Jack to go back to 'the dark side' as he called it) talking about how

much Keith had missed. Jack had got him up to date with everything important and everyone else had filled in the rest. "You know, to see Maggie. She can ride on the back of my bike if she wants to come with."

"Wow, since when can you give rides?" Keith joked. He knew Jack had been trying to get it right before he left, so it was only a matter of time before he did really.

"I used to pick Belinda up in the mornings," he said, grinning back. "But I suppose you'll be able to do that. Unless she's still planning on walking Maggie to school..."

Keith just couldn't answer. There was so much he didn't know about Belinda, obviously. For example, he had known Belinda was staying at his house, but he had no idea why. And then there was that whole being alone thing. He had never bothered to ask why she didn't like being alone, why she got so scared when she was.

"I realise this is going to sound stupid to you, but why's Belinda staying at my house?"

"Oh, God, sorry! I forgot, you wouldn't know. Her mum's in hospital and Gina said she'd take her in. It was really awkward for Bel but Maggie tried to make her feel more at home. But Belinda was such a mess, you know? Everything just seemed to go wrong. If there is a God, I can't see what Bel did to piss him off so much..."

"But...what about her dad?"

"Oh, he walked out years ago. Her mum went a little crazy after that, you know," he mimed chugging a bottle "and...well, Belinda hasn't heard from him since. Like I said, sucky life. She was really lucky Gina took her in actually."

"Yeah," Keith said distractedly. No wonder Belinda was always so cynical. Who exactly was she supposed to trust? "Why's her mum in hospital now?"

Jack looked uncomfortable, glancing around the room before looking back at Keith apologetically. "I can't really tell you about it," he admitted. "If Belinda wants to tell you, when she wakes up, she will. But...it's just not my story so it's kind of unfair if I tell

it. Anyway, it's not like she wouldn't want you to know. I just think she'd want to tell you herself."

"Nah, it's fine," Keith shrugged, understanding completely. "Sort of like my being the way I am. I wouldn't really want people talking about it."

"Hey, you're not mad that I know, are you?" Jack asked worriedly. He always had difficulty reading Keith. "Because, I'm really sorry. Belinda just thought I would like to come with and get you. Plus, it's a little difficult for her to keep secrets from me. Ditto for me, just so you know."

Keith pondered that for a moment, wondering why Belinda hadn't told him how well she was getting on with Jack. It wasn't like she hadn't had the opportunity. Maybe she doesn't want to talk about it with you, part of him whispered. Don't you think it would be a little awkward for her to bring up a new boyfriend with a sort-of-but-not-really-because-he-was-faking-it boyfriend? He almost got the courage to ask how long they had been dating when he heard someone else say his name.

"So, why're you two sitting all the way over here?" Emma said chirpily, looking at Keith. It was like this morning with Jack had never happened. "I mean, it's not like there's anyone else sitting over here."

"Yeah, well, maybe it's just to be away from the people over there," Jack said, his voice icy. "You know, you're really wrecking my lunch."

"Um, whatever Jack," she said, rolling her eyes. "What about you Keith? Like I said this morning, everyone's dying to see you. But, if you want, everyone could come over here..."

"Uh, no, that's fine," Keith said quickly, taking a short glance at Jack's glare. "Tell everyone I'll catch up with them later. I'm just catching up with Jack at the minute."

"God, how can you put up with her?" Jack hissed once Emma was out of earshot. "She such a -"

"- pain?" Keith quipped, cutting Jack off. "Look, I've got no reason to start a fight with her. Yeah, she's a bit weird, but maybe she can't help it."

Jack just rolled his eyes and changed the topic. It was weird for Jack to be so totally against someone but Keith just went with it, hoping Jack would lighten up a little once Belinda was awake. When the bell rang, Keith and Jack both headed their separate ways for maths. Keith had to steel himself before stepping into the classroom. He couldn't help his eyes flickering over Belinda's empty seat.

"Ah, Mr. James, how lovely to see you back! I hope you're ready to put in some heavy work - it's not going to be easy catching up."

"Yes sir," Keith said automatically, his mind still far away. "I'm going to try really hard, at home too."

The teacher just nodded allowing him to sit down and sink into his thoughts. He tried - unbelievably hard - to keep up in the lesson but it was difficult. He just wasn't at the same point as the rest of them. He just kept looking back to Belinda's seat, wishing she was sitting there, helping him with it.

When the bell finally rang again, Keith had to stop himself running from the room. It was just too depressing, sitting there thinking about Belinda. But

once he was out again, he looked out for Jack. When he spotted him again, he was talking to Max, a guy from PE. As Keith got closer, he heard Jack saying, "...not true, honestly. And if Emma's stupid enough to start spreading rumours I-"

"Okay man, chill," Max replied. "I was just wondering, you know? You're always hanging out with her so I thought I'd ask. Don't worry, I'll tell everyone it's not true."

"Hey, what was that about," Keith queried, his eyes keen on Jack's.

"Emma's being spreading rumours," Jack said, chuckling humourlessly. "And guess who they're about?"

Keith groaned, not wanting to concede that Emma really was just evil. He shrugged uncomfortably before gripping Jack by the shoulder and muttering a hasty "come on". He didn't want to have this conversation here, where anyone could hear them. He also didn't want to know just what the rumours were - he might not be able to keep his cool. Jack was

just as silent as they got their bicycles. He just got on it, more tense than Keith had ever seen him.

"Hey, come on man," Keith said as they started towards the gates. "It can't be that bad. And Belinda can set everything straight when she's out, right?"

"Yeah, but it's still not fair. Emma's such a bi-"

"Okay, yeah, she's meaner than I thought," Keith finally conceded. "Uh, where are you going? My house is that-a-way."

"I thought we could go get Maggie. It's not so far out of the way. Plus, I really do want to see how she's holding up."

"Oh, sure," Keith nodded, following Jack. He never went by Maggie's school, so he didn't know the way. "She's happier today, just so you know. Mum finally let her keep one of those random cats she found."

"Oh, awesome. Hey Maggie!" Jack called, waving to her. She smiled when she saw them both, bouncing up to them. "You're lift's here. Ever ridden on the back seat?"

"Uh, no. But it can't be too difficult. Belinda never fell off."

"True, and you're much lighter. Come on, I want to get back to yours before we head off to the hospital. Then we can ditch the bags. Had a good day?"

"Same old really. But mum let me keep a cat," she said, climbing onto the back of Jack's bicycle. "So I've got to get her some cat food after the hospital."

"Or before," Jack said, nodding his head to the side, letting Keith know he was stopping. "Come on, the poor thing's probably starving."

When they were finally back at the house, Maggie raced up to her room, taking the tins of cat food with her. She seemed so happy, leaping up the stairs, two at a time. Jack looked more relaxed now that he had seen Maggie. Maybe being away from the school helped a little too. He was sitting on the sofa, looking at a book. It was a pretty green colour, about the size of a regular hard back novel, only thinner.

"What's that?" Keith asked, curious.

"It's a book Belinda's been carrying around. Or, at least she was, before she told me what was going on. I was wondering what it was."

"Let's have a look."

As they both opened it, the first think Keith noticed was that it was handwritten. He immediately put a hand on it, blocking both of their views. Jack looked up, confused.

"I think it's a diary. Belinda used to keep one. Actually, I need to return that..."

"You stole her diary? Smooth Keith, real smooth," Jack snorted, flicking the book out from under his hands. "Besides, she never wrote in this. I thought she was reading it most of the time."

"Oh, that," Keith said, disinterested. "Yeah, that's way old. She found it in the attic, some random relative I think."

"Huh, why was she reading it then?"

"I don't know, something about it 'calling to her'. I didn't really think a book could do that..."

"That's so untrue," Maggie said from the stairs. "You read Belinda's, didn't you?"

"Well, yeah, but I had my reasons for that," Keith retorted, going slightly red. "It's not something I really think about Mags."

"Well, you still did it. Wasn't she really mad at you for that? Are you going to give it back when she wakes up?"

"I-" Keith began before stopping. Where had he put it? He remembered having it when he went to Belinda's house...he gave a sudden, short laugh. Jack and Maggie looked at him oddly. "I think I already did. I might've accidentally left it at hers, that day I went over."

Maggie just laughed with him, stroking the cat in her hands. Jack looked at him oddly, before his eyes went to the cat Maggie was holding.

"So, what're you calling it?"

"I don't want to name her yet. I'll name her when I know she doesn't have an owner, just to be sure. And

maybe by then Belinda can help me think of a name. You know, I don't know if she likes animals..."

It wasn't much later that Gina got back. She ushered them into the car before driving them to the hospital. She seemed distracted but Keith and Maggie didn't pay it much mind. Gina was always distracted by something or other. Only Jack ventured to question it and he got the usual 'everything's fine', so the other two didn't feel too guilty.

It was horrible, sitting there with Belinda, in turns, trying to see if she could hear them. When Maggie went in, all Keith and Jack could hear was her chattering away, obviously trying to fill the silence that Belinda couldn't. Jack went in next, but Keith couldn't hear a word. It wasn't like Jack to talk for no reason, so Keith supposed it made sense.

When Keith finally went inside, he couldn't help but stroke her cheek, gently. He wished it was enough to wake her, to make her blush and look at him like she always did. But she didn't even twitch at his touch, which was more than he could say. He moment his fingers had touched her cheek, he had felt the same

electric jolt, the same bundle of electricity shooting through him that he always did. And, like every other time, it killed a little part of him inside, knowing that he couldn't know what was going on inside that head of hers.

He looked at her hair, stroking it gently. It had lost it's bounce. He wondered if it was because she had. He didn't care. She was pale - even paler than before, when she had watched him falling into that portal. He thought she looked lifeless, not unlike a porcelain doll. It made his heart ache to know she might not even be aware that he was there, that he was watching her. It hurt even more to leave her there when he had to go home. And that night, with nobody to watch him, he let the tears he couldn't let anyone else see fall.

[Yeah, I would've cried if I wasn't so blooming tired. Night all! Oh, and comment please and thank you!]

Chapter 11

I Can't Give Him Up... - Part 11

[Oh yeah, I'm awesome. Third part today (sort of) so now I REALLY AM going to get some sleep. Comment pleases, and Happy Reading ^_^]

The next couple of weeks passed in a blur. Keith thought that time was rushing him on, speeding itself up when all he wanted was time to think. He was catching up in every subject except maths. He was struggling along, trying to make sense of what they had already done but it was all nonsense to him. Not for the first time, he wished Belinda was there to guide him through the difficult parts.

He looked up at the clock as he came into the house and sighed. Four o' clock on a Monday and he had nothing to do. Might as well get cracking on that algebra, he thought gloomily. He looked at the book in front of him, trying to make sense of what it was telling him. It all seemed to fade into just squiggles on a page, like a foreign language. He felt his phone buzz in his pocket and he pulled it out.

"Hello?" he asked cautiously. It happened, getting a wrong number, especially from a private line. He felt the cat wind itself around his feet and he petted it's head. They still hadn't gotten around to naming it and Keith had that feeling that it was just going to be called 'cat'. Just because they were so used to calling it that.

When the other end of the line went static, he sighed and clicked the 'end call' button. He really hated it when people didn't talk and just hung up. It was about as useful as sending an e-mail to an out-of-use address. He flipped his phone shut before trying to concentrate on the book in front of him again.

* * *

Belinda could feel the white mist finally clearing (how long had it been?), leaving behind a faint after burn of clear air. She looked in every direction she could, searching for something, anything that could tell her where she was. She was sure she wasn't in the other world, the one with Andrew. But she didn't recognise where she was. At least, she wasn't sure if she recognised it. it was hard to tell where she was when all she could see was blank in every direction.

"Hello?" she called out hoarsely, her throat aching from the effort. She wished she had some water, just to help her clear her throat. She coughed and tried again. "Keith? Jack? Maggie? Gina? Hello?! Is anyone there? Can anyone hea-"

Belinda started coughing uncontrollably, doubling over, wanting to drink some cool clear water. And she doubled over, her head hit something. A wall? It was an obstruction at least so she tried to give it more room. She backed away until she hit something behind her. Odd, she thought. I've only taken a step or two... She tried walking to either side but again

she was stopped after only a step. Okay, stay calm, that's probably just your mind playing tricks on you...

Belinda didn't start to panic until she felt a heavy weight pressing down on her body, leaving only her head free. She felt like screaming but her throat was just so Goddamn dry! She could feel pain in her chest, her stomach and along her limbs as she tried to break free of whatever was stopping her.

And then, suddenly, this second, solid mist was clearing. She could see a light above her, shining overly brightly. She tilted her head slowly, trying not to make the pounding worse. She could see a jug of water, complete with a cup, waiting to be filled and then drunk from. But she still couldn't move an inch. She could feel her helplessness, her utter dependency on whoever came through the door and she started to cry.

It wasn't loud crying but it wasn't silent. And somebody - thank God - must have heard her from outside this tiny room. Strange, that looks like a nurse... The man gasped when he saw her, rushing back out again, calling for a doctor. She tried to hear

what he was saying but she was too tired. She just wanted some water so she could go to sleep - real sleep, with real rest.

"Belinda, hi," said the man who came in now. He looked official, his doctor's coat neat and proper. "How're you feeling sweetie? You've been unconscious for a long time. Can you tell me you're birthday?"

"Wuh," she started, her voice cracking drily. The doctor looked at her expectantly. "Wu-wa-wat-ter...water..."

He followed her gaze and saw the jug by her bed and immediately filled the cup. He murmured something to the nurse who had come in and he returned, holding a straw. Belinda felt the doctor put the straw in her mouth and she sucked on hit greedily. It felt like ti had been years since she had had a drink...

"Now, can you tell me your full name?"

"Bel...Belinda Amy Godfrey," she said, trying to get used to talking again. "My birthday's...the twenty-third of April and...my mum's name is Elizabeth..."

"Okay, that's good Belinda," he encouraged, smiling warmly. "Now, do you remember why you're in here?"

"There was...I couldn't breathe. Something was stopping me breathing...I...I don't...I don't know," she said, looking panicked before she remembered something. "Keith? Where's Keith? Is he okay?"

"Okay, calm down Belinda, you've had a nasty shock. I'm sure this Keith fellow is fine. Right now, we need you to calm down and relax. Everything's going to be just fine. Okay? Now, how can we get hold of your mother?"

"What're you talking about? She's in here, in the hospital. Isn't she? Did she get better? Is she okay?"

The doctor looked at the nurse again and started mumbling under their breaths. Belinda hoped that her mum was okay, had woken up whilst she was stuck in here. Even if her mum was worried sick, waiting for her to wake up, she wanted to know she was okay. The doctor was still talking at her but she was so tired.

"Sorry...just call...Keith...James..." she murmured, before falling blissfully into sleep.

* * *

Keith was really beginning to hate school, it's monotony boring him senseless. All he wanted to do when he got home was go to sleep. He saw a light flickering on the answering machine and he had that strange sensation of déjà vu. He wondered if he was actually asleep, reliving that day that Belinda had called him, desperate for help, for company.

"...and we would appreciate it greatly if Keith James would call back. Thank you."

Curious, Keith called the hospital back. He could feel his hopes building, his stomach knotting with tension. He waited impatiently as the nurse confirmed that it was the right hospital and he answered in hurried tones, "Yes, this is Keith James. I received a phone call asking me to call back?" He crossed his fingers, praying.

"Yes, Mr James, one of our patients was asking for you. Miss Godfrey I believe. She's asleep again now but..."

Keith could barely breathe. He muttered a brief thanks before going for his bicycle. Maggie was just coming through the door but he dragged her with him, ignoring her stuttered questions. She was still demanding answers as he slammed the helmet onto her head, making sure to tighten it fully.

"Look," he snapped. "I don't really have time to explain. I got a call from the hospital."

"And," Maggie said, excitement evident in her voice.

"She's awake. Or at least she was. The hospital says she's been asking for us. So I'm going over. I assume you want to come with-"

"What're you waiting for? Let's go!" she demanded, jumping up behind him.

Chapter 12

I Can't Give Him Up... - Part 12

[Woot, super long part! Enjoy it guys, because I'm not near my computer tomorrow. Hopefully I can do a little bit, but like I said before: school's starting and I might have to do chauffeuring around...anywho, it's going to be difficult to type anything. So, enjoy what you can get! Oh, and comments pleases! I am in much need of those...Happy Reading! ^_^]

Keith stood outside the door to Belinda's room, fidgeting nervously. Maggie was waiting outside for Jack and this might very well be the last time - for now, at least - that he could talk to her alone. And he couldn't do it because he was scared out of his wits, scared that she would blame him too. But Maggie had

insisted that he be the first in there, seeing as she had asked for him.

Hesitantly, he pushed the door open. She was asleep again, that much was obvious. Yet, this seemed a more peaceful slumber, as opposed to an enforced unconsciousness. Unlike before, when she was lying on her back, she was curled up in a ball on her side, breathing rhythmically. He stepped forward now, eager to hear her, to know she was alright. His hand brushed against her cheek, making his fingertips tingle.

And then her eyelids were fluttering open, her beautiful green eyes catching him where he stood. His hand stayed at her cheek as she started to sit up, smiling slightly. She looked so relieved, so alive that he couldn't help but let go of the breath he had been holding.

"Keith, you're okay!" Belinda cried out, trying to fling her arms around him. She looked at the IV in her arm with such frustration that Keith couldn't help but laugh. "What? What's so funny?" she asked

eagerly, forgetting to be mad at him for laughing at her.

"I'm okay? Jeez Belinda, I'm not the one who's been in hospital for nearly three goddamned weeks! Do you know how much everyone's been missing you?"

"Says the guy who was stuck in a world with genies for two months! And I guarantee you were missed more."

"Oh, come on," Keith said, trying - and failing - not to blush. "It's just that I know more people. Trust me, if you knew them, they'd miss you more."

He hadn't realised that he was leaning forward, looking into those fathomless eyes. He only realised that they were so close when someone came barging into the room, making Keith jump nearly out of his skin. His hand jumped from her face automatically, his cheeks going an even deeper shade of red.

"You're really awake!" Jack called out, rushing to sit by her, hugging her tightly. Keith felt the guilt hit him full force. What had he been doing? Okay, so he missed her. Was that really a good excuse for what

he'd been about to do? He felt the blush receding as the guilt overwhelmed him and he muttered something about going to get a drink.

"What? But you just got he-"

He didn't wait to hear the rest of Belinda's sentence. He had to get out of there now. Before he did something Jack would never forgive him for. He had already told himself he was going to keep his distance, going to let Jack make her happy. It was too much for him to cope with, being in the same room - alone - with her. He wondered, vaguely, whether this was what it was like to give up drugs. It was like she was a necessity, something he couldn't live without which he knew was absurd.

"Keith?" Maggie's voice brought him out of his depressed train of thought. He looked up at her from where he was sitting, next to the coffee machine. "Are you okay? Belinda looked kind of stressed and Jack said you ran out."

"Just came for some tea," Keith said, half-heartedly pointing at the machine. "Plus, didn't Jack want to talk to her...alone? I mean..."

"Well, he's not complaining, you know? Except Belinda thinks she said something wrong and he's trying to calm her down some. Not really working too well."

"It's not? Why?"

Maggie shrugged, before changing the subject slightly.

"Anyway, what are you going to do about her diary? Because you could always go looking for it, if you asked for her keys. You could say you were doing some spring cleaning."

Keith rolled his eyes. "Yeah, or I could tell her the truth. You know, lying isn't really the way to go with Belinda." Worked that out the hard way, he thought grimly. "It doesn't really matter much anyway - she can go for it herself soon."

"She doesn't really like going to her house. You know, since her mum is in hospital. She said it was too weird."

Keith nodded, as his drink finished chugging out of the machine and he and Maggie made their way back

to the room. He decided to knock first, to make sure he didn't walk in on anything too...he shook his head as he heard Jack say 'come in' and took a deep breath. He knew Maggie was looking at him strangely but he ignored it, trying not to freak out.

Jack was sitting on the bed with Belinda, only at the foot. Belinda was smiling at the door again, her eyes meeting with Keith's straight away. He attempted to smile again, hoping it came out less forced than it felt. He just sat down, listening to the conversation continuing. He could feel it getting more and more quiet as he shut his eyes, trying to erase the image of Jack and Belinda that he could imagine every time he saw them together.

"Is he asleep?" Jack asked incredulously. "Seriously, you wake up and he decides to take a nap!"

"Hey, come on," Belinda chided softly. She didn't want to wake him up, didn't want to disrupt his rest. "So anyway, I think I managed to talk the doctors into letting me out tomorrow. They're not happy about it, but I've been doing much better today. They're

surprised, actually. They didn't think I would wake up. Guess I should really start learning to swim..."

"Keith could teach you," Maggie said unexpectedly. "What? He's a good swimmer and he knows a little bit about teaching. He's not great but I reckon he could do it. He taught me."

Belinda considered it. Honestly, she hadn't been serious about learning to swim but the thought of swimming with Keith was appealing. At least then there would be a reason to talk to him, not like with maths...

"Oh my God, maths! How much have I missed? Oh God, I'm so doomed. How long have I got left until the exams?! Oh man, I'm so screwed!"

"Bel, chill," Jack said, worried that she was going to have a panic attack. "It's only been a couple of weeks. You'll catch up in no time, honest. I mean, imagine what it's like for Keith! He missed two months of this and since he got back...well, he's been working hard but he couldn't get anyone to help him in maths. He's going to need your help, you know?"

Belinda flushed slightly, thinking about the last time she had tried to 'help' Keith with maths. Yeah, that worked out great, she thought sarcastically. Maybe he could help you with English and science though... She let her gaze skip over him briefly before looking back to Maggie and Jack. She wished she could honestly say that she wanted Keith's help but...she didn't want to seem too desperate to spend time with him.

"Maybe...anyway, how's things been at home Mags? You've been remembering to close all the windows, right?"

"Actually," Maggie said, flushing slightly. "Actually, I didn't a couple of weeks ago. It was early in the morning," she said defensively. "And it wasn't like I left the house. Anyway, a cat got in. And mum let me keep her. I can't wait for you to meet her Bel, she's so sweet."

"Have they let you out of the room so you can go see your mum yet?" Jack quizzed, changing the subject suddenly. "Because they wouldn't let any of us go and see her, seeing as we weren't family. And, you know, she might be dong better, mightn't she?"

Belinda thought about this. She had asked to leave the room, so she could go see her mum but nobody had wanted to give her permission in case she collapsed. It had annoyed her but she had seen why they had done it. But when Jack brought it up again, she knew that she needed to go see her mum. If I woke up, she thought, Maybe mum did too. It's not that unlikely...

Jack looked at his watch and cursed, not wanting to leave. But it was already five past four and he couldn't hang around forever. In fact, his dad needed his help moving the new bed in. He looked quickly at Belinda and she seemed to understand that he needed to go. He smiled apologetically before turning to Maggie and asking if she wanted a lift, so she could make sure the cat was okay.

"Oh, bum, yeah, I forgot. Listen, Belinda, I'm going to go back with him but Keith'll keep you company. Just prod him every now and again. He'll wake up."

Belinda just smiled, letting them leave and then she turned back to Keith. He really did look too peaceful to wake up. She looked at him for another minute

before she thought she heard a noise at the window. She looked over curiously before letting out the shrillest scream she'd never thought she had in her. Keith jumped up, like he'd received an electric shock, looking around wildly.

What he saw at the window made him yelp as well. He leapt over the bed, flicking his hands towards the window lock. As the window swung open, his hands let loose the power he was gathering there. Belinda started sobbing, her throat killing her. When Keith had locked the window again, he came back and held her tightly, rocking her back and forth.

"It's okay, he's gone," he murmured, letting her cry out the surprise. He had to admit that he was a little bit more than shocked himself. He kept hold of her as a nurse came in, wanting to know what the racket was about. "She thought she saw something at the window. It gave her a bit of a fright, you know? She's just a little tired."

"Maybe you should go home then young man," the nurse said pointedly. "If she's tired, wouldn't you rather leave her to rest?"

"I'm waiting for my mum to come and get me," he explained, trying to seem as innocent as possible. He couldn't leave Belinda alone now, not if Andrew was here. He just tried to will her to leave, so that he could keep reassuring Belinda, keep letting her know that it was going to be alright. When the nurse finally did leave Keith held Belinda even closer, trying to hush her and make her feel secure at the same time.

"Why- What- how?" she whispered, shuddering and choking on the thought. She huddled into a ball in his arms, clinging to them in fear. He just held her back, murmuring nonsense into her hair. God, he'd missed her. Even if she was scared, even if Andrew was the one who was making her act this way he was just happy to be holding her again.

When Belinda had finally calmed down enough that she could let go of him - even a little - he didn't let her crawl out of his lap. He was too comfortable, too desperate to touch her. She looked up at him, her eyes round and bright with tears. Her face was so close to his, her breath brushing his lips. He leaned down, his forehead colliding gently with hers and his

eyes closed. He wished he just wanted to sit with her, keep it innocent. He didn't want Jack to hate him but it was so difficult, to just sit there and not kiss her, to not wrap his hands around her face and hold her to him.

Belinda closed her eyes, willing him to kiss her. She hardly dared to breathe in case he pulled away but she didn't dare kiss him. She could feel his heat caressing her, warming her up from deep inside. She let her arms fall against his, her bare arms covered in gooseflesh. She didn't care that she was shivering, that his heat made her shudder in delight. She just wanted to stay there, forever.

Keith could feel her shiver and his arms came up automatically to warm her up. The electricity that passed between hem was getting easier to deal with, was becoming something he craved as opposed to avoided. And it was so- so natural to lean into her, to press his nose to her cheek, to feel her heartbeat race under his fingertips. It was so easy to just let it go, to feel her breath quicken against his lips, to-

"Belinda?" came Gina's call from outside the door. Keith jerked away again, wishing he could pretend that what had just happened wasn't real. He could see the flush spreading across Belinda's face and he knew he was breathing hard. His arms had dropped away from her immediately and they were already desperate to seek her warmth. His hands were already pressing into her back, even as she called out to Gina.

"Is everything okay?" she asked tentatively. She had known something was wrong, had seen the way the nurses had been glancing at the room. But she was willing to let Keith and Belinda explain what had happened. "Some of the nurses were looking a little...jumpy. What happened?"

Keith quickly explained, trying not to notice the way she kept looking at how they were sitting. It's completely fine, totally innocent...she didn't wait long enough for anything to have happened...not that I would have done anything... his thoughts were spiralling desperately, not helped in the slightest at the way Belinda was going to sleep in his arms. If

Jack had been there, Keith was sure he would have started to suspect something.

"Hmm, yes," Gina said, once Keith was done. "I did wonder what had happened to him. It didn't make sense that he just left you alone when Belinda fell in. He must have latched onto one of you..."

"So, hang on, he's here because we weren't paying enough attention?" Keith asked incredulously. "I mean, not that we really could have. We didn't even know if Belinda was okay and...I'm sorry mum, I panicked."

"No, don't apologise. Anyone would have done it. The only problem now is that he knows what he's dealing with. That's going to make it difficult to get to him."

They started talking through everything and Belinda couldn't keep up. She honestly had no idea what was going on and she was just so comfortable and safe with Keith there. She knew she was drifting, even as she tried not to. And then she gave up and started dreaming. Of Keith and what might have happened if she hadn't stopped him that one time...

[Yeah, I figured that the Belinda and Keith moment is a little cruel but maybe a bit more exciting if it's forbidden! ;) Comment! x ^_^]

Chapter 13

I Can't Give Him Up... - Part 13

[Whoop, so here's the second part today. And I know some people are going to be happy and relieved with it's contents. So, Comment and enjoy! Happy Reading! ^_^]

It was the next day when Belinda finally woke up. She was tucked in, her hair spilling all over the pillow. She sat up, trying to get a sense of what had happened before she went to sleep. She remembered the way Keith had held her, the way he had leaned against her before Gina had come in, ruining the moment. She wasn't even sure he was going to kiss her, that he had even been thinking along the same lines!

It was frustrating, not knowing what he was thinking, not knowing how he felt when he was with her. She looked for her watch and spotted a hasty note sitting on the small cabinet by her head. She opened curiously, wondering who would have left her a note. It read:

'Hey Belinda, sorry I had to leave. I tried to say goodbye but you were just so asleep! See you tomorrow, we're going to spring you out. It's just not safe when Andrew knows you're there on your own. Keith x'

Belinda smiled as the doctor came into her room to take her temperature, see how her heart rate was doing...apparently the usual. Minus the response check under her eyelids. He seemed impressed with her, obviously surprised that she was this much better in one day. She felt more normal than she had since...since she couldn't remember. Better than normal, she felt fantastic.

"Am I getting out of here today?" she asked, curiosity bubbling. She knew she shouldn't hope to get out but Keith had given her hope a boost. "It's just...I'm none

too comfortable staying here. I think I'd be more comfortable..."

"Hmm, well, you are doing much better," the doctor admitted, making her grin. "Listen, let's make a deal. You manage to have both breakfast and lunch without throwing it up and we'll see what we can do to get you out of here. Lord knows we need all the beds we can get and if you're feeling better..."

Belinda obediently ate her meals, forcing them to stay there. She refused to throw up, not wanting to stay in the hospital. She was desperate to be at Keith's house, safe and cared for. She was afraid that if she stayed here much longer something was going to go wrong. As the hours inched their way past, she started packing what Maggie had brought for her, in case she woke up whilst they weren't there she assumed.

It was much later that a knock came at her door. Keith was coming in, hesitating on the threshold. He looked embarrassed to be there and she realised that he had gotten pretty close to her yesterday. Maybe he thought she was mad at him. Or maybe he had

realised what he had been about to do and was embarrassed at what she might think was going on. Or maybe-

"Hey, listen. Maggie packed you some clothes, you know, for the ride home. But...she decided to wait with mum. So be quick getting changed, okay? Then we'll get you discharged and we can go home. Okay?"

"S-sure," Belinda stuttered, blushing at her own idiocy. She wished she could say something smart, to make yesterday seem like it had never happened, like it wasn't the highlight of her day. "Hey, um, about yesterday-"

"What about yesterday?" he answered, too quickly. He gritted his teeth and tried to make light of it. He didn't want her telling Jack that he was getting a little too friendly with her. "You mean with Andrew? Uh, we don't know what we're going to do yet but...we'll figure something out. Now hurry up and get dressed so we can go, yeah?"

Belinda nodded and sighed internally. He obviously hadn't meant to do anything 'untoward' to her, which meant he hadn't been thinking about kissing her. So

she might as well forget all those little fantasies that had tumbled through her head last night...

When she was finally dressed, she picked up her bags and went to discharge herself. She smiled at the nurse in a way she hoped was healthy and then let Keith usher out of the building, his arm slung protectively around her shoulder. Probably to protect her from Andrew, should he appear in front of them. And then he was bundling her into the car, next to himself (Maggie was sitting up front) and then they were moving away.

Keith stole a quick glance at her, unsurprised to see her fast asleep. Everything must have been overwhelming her, from him making her feel unfaithful to Jack, to Andrew appearing out of nowhere and scaring the living daylights out of her. He slid his hand over to her, his pinky finger barely brushing her own. He barely even felt the miniscule electric jolt this time and he was grateful. He just needed to know that she was really there, sleeping so peacefully. He would have hated to have found out she was just a figment of his imagination.

As Belinda re-awoke, she tried not to jerk away from the tingling sensation in her hand. It was such a warm tingle that she knew who had to be touching her. And she didn't want that to end, not when he had touched her first. But as everyone was getting out of the car, she realised she would need to get up to get out. At least, she thought she did until someone's strong arms were lifting her gently, cradling her to his chest.

She snuggled into his arms, trying not to seem awake, and then relaxed again, his body warming her all over. She was glad, in that moment, that she was so tiny. But she knew she would have to stop fake sleeping so she started to stretch a little, rubbing her eyes blearily. Keith hesitated, not sure whether to put her down or not. In the end, he decided to get her indoors before something could go wrong.

Setting her gently on her feet, he kept an arm around her to make sure she didn't topple over. And then she was looking up at him again, so trusting and innocent, her lips parted slightly. He pulled away from her abruptly, not letting himself fall into that

trap again, not letting himself get so close. She looked confused and unsteady for a moment before she looked away, blushing furiously.

He walked past her, trying not to notice the way her arm brushed his, the way her hand half reached for his. This isn't fair, he thought violently as he entered the kitchen. She's not allowed to be so goddamned adorable, that...vulnerable. It's just not fair. He heard someone knocking at the back door and he knew that only Jack would come in the back. He swung the door open and let him in, indicating the other room. He was afraid that if he said anything, he would blurt out something unnecessary and entirely true. Like how much he loved Belinda, and that Jack wasn't allowed to have her.

Listening to the conversation next door, Keith was surprised at how...normal it seemed. Sort of like how Keith talked to Maggie but with a more equal understanding of what was happening. He shook his head slightly, trying to concentrate on washing up until he heard Belinda excuse herself. Then he couldn't help but go out to the living room.

"Hey man! It's good to have her home, isn't it?"

"Uh, yeah, it's great," Keith replied cautiously. He tried to think of a safe way to breach the topic, some way to sound interested without sounding nosy... "So, how long has that been going on?"

"What?" Jack asked, genuinely confused. What was Keith talking about?

"You know, you and Belinda..." Keith said, trailing off suggestively, hoping Jack would pick up on it before he had to say it outright. He didn't. Keith groaned internally. "How long have you two been...dating?"

"What?!?!" Jack said, dumbstruck. "You think...are you nuts?"

"Well...I mean, come on," Keith said, feeling both uncomfortable and extremely relieved. They weren't dating? "You're always hanging around her..."

"But...she's...it's hard to explain, you know? She's more like...a sister to me, like Maggie. Only, you know, older."

"Really? You mean it? Because, I mean, if you're just saying that..." Keith said, the threat barely concealed. He didn't want to find out that he'd been leading Belinda on, even if it was what Keith had done not that long ago.

"This is insane! Why on Earth would you think there's anything going on with me and Bel?" Jack exclaimed, exasperated. "We're friends - that's it!"

"Who're you talking about?" Belinda asked, bouncing into the room. Her green eyes were bright, her head cocked to the side.

"Nothing," Jack said suddenly, turning to Belinda. She knew he was lying. It was so obvious, like he'd said the light was off or the sky was green. "I'm just heading home and Keith wanted to make sure I didn't need a lift. But, what with my bike, I'm just going to head off. See you Monday Bel!"

"Okay, what was that about?" Belinda asked, rounding on Keith the minute Jack was gone. Keith didn't know what to say to her. He was so relieved that she wasn't taken, that she wasn't dating his best friend that he just smiled at her. He knew she must

be wondering what the hell he was on but he didn't care. "Earth to Keith, anyone home?"

"Huh? Oh, it was nothing," he breezed, walking back through to the kitchen. "Hey, listen, about school..."

"Oh God, don't remind me," she groaned, slumping into a chair. She let her head rest on the table in front of her. Keith put his arm around her, carelessly. Now that he knew he had nothing to feel guilty about, he didn't want to keep his distance. She looked up at him, her expression curious. He just smiled back, his eyes much happier than they had been recently. "Whatever Jack said, it was obviously good news."

He chuckled before pulling away again. "Don't change the subject. I need some serious help with maths and, seeing as you're the smartest girl in class, I figure you could give me a hand. You're always ahead, aren't you?"

"I was. Where are we at now?"

"Hang on, go into the other room and I'll get my books."

[Yay for Belinda and Keith-ness! Lol, so now you know the truth about Belinda and Jack! Comment! ^_^]

Chapter 14

I Can't Give Him Up... - Part 14

[Short one - wasn't really needed in the story so I thought I'd do it and put it up. Is cute BelindaxKeith moment! I know, I wanted them to end up together from book one really. I just love making you guys sweat it. Heh, so comment on the chapter, the meanness of me...ANYTHING. Show me some love people! Happy Reading! ^_^]

"Oh, wow, that's so much easier than I thought. Thanks, really."

"No problem. And if you get stuck, I'll help out. Just, you know, try to keep up now, okay?"

"Haha, very funny Belinda." He rolled his eyes, and flicked his pen lid at her. She giggled and stuck her tongue out at him. "Yeah, real mature. Tell me, is Maggie the fifteen-year-old, or are you?"

"Oh, I'm not fifteen. My birthday was like a week ago. I'm officially sixteen now. Legal, if you know what I mean."

Keith blushed a little before realising what she meant. "Wait, you missed your birthday?! What the hell? How come you're not really mad?"

"Because, it's just a birthday. Besides, it's never much fun anyway."

"Yeah, but your sixteenth...and like you said, legal..." he trailed off blushing.

Belinda laughed, messing with his hair. "To buy a lottery ticket, duh. Or did you have something else in mind?"

Keith just kept blushing, trying not to pay attention to that weird little tingling in his stomach. He just brushed his fingers through his hair, smoothing it back again. She reached for it again but he just

caught her fingers, pushing her hand down. She stopped laughing, the smile becoming less obvious. He tugged on her hand, pulling her toward him. It was so much easier now, to just let his lips fit to hers, to run his hand up her neck and pull her closer.

Belinda gave a small squeak of surprise before kissing back, her mind fizzing. Hell, everything melted inside when he crushed his lips to hers, making her weak and light headed. The only thing that stopped her from turning into a puddle was the electricity coursing between them, the way his hand couldn't seem to stop running through her hair. The way his other hand was roaming freely around her stomach.

"Belinda? Are you going to come meet my cat or should I bring her down to you?"

Belinda broke away abruptly, her breathing coming fast and hard. Her eyes were open now, looking into Keith's. He looked vaguely annoyed but mostly dazed, like he couldn't believe what had just happened. In a good way. He kissed her briefly, sweetly, before helping her to stand.

"You know, for a psychic, she really does pick her moments..." Keith murmured before saying goodnight and going to his room. Belinda laughed softly before knocking gently on Maggie's door. Maggie let her in immediately, dragging her to look at the cat, nattering about how she didn't know what to call it. Belinda smiled before getting herself stuck into choosing a name.

Keith lay on his bed, grinning at the ceiling. He had thought it would take some convincing to get her to kiss him again. He had honestly thought that he had made such a monumental bodge-job of it that she wouldn't want to go near him. And yet...he let his mind wander back to the kiss, the way she had tasted. He grinned happily before rolling over to get some sleep. He actually couldn't wait for school tomorrow...

Chapter 15

I Can't Give Him Up... - Part 15

[Okay, so it's short. I'm trying to keep up with two stories now, so it's going to be a little more difficult. But, hopefully, I won't find it too much trouble and give up! ^_^ Comment please! Happy Reading ^_^]

Belinda woke up inside a house. She knew it was a house because she couldn't hear the constant bleeping you could always hear in hospitals, nor did it smell of disinfectant. She smiled as she looked around, taking in the now familiar sights of the James' spare room. She looked at her silent clock and smiled again. It was five thirty in the morning. Some things evidently never changed.

She made her way downstairs, sweeping her hair into a ponytail as she started her usual morning routine. She yawned, pushing bread into the toaster as she turned on the kettle. She was going to need caffeine if she was going to make it through the day and she desperately wanted to make it through the day. She started humming as the kettle reached boiling point and she poured herself a mug of tea.

As she put the kettle down she felt Keith's arms slip around her waist. She jumped slightly and he chuckled into her ear, dragging her away from her drink. She blushed and tried to push him away. He chuckled again, pulling her right up to him.

"Keith," she whispered furiously. "Let go! I've got to get ready! My tea's going to go cold..."

"So make another one," he whispered, his lips brushing her neck. She gave p trying to push him away and just relaxed into him, enjoying the feel of it. She tilted her head back, looking at him. He kissed her gently on her forehead, his lips only just brushing it. "And it's not like you haven't got time.

Jack's coming around to give Maggie a lift and you're riding on the back of my bike."

"Oh really?" Belinda asked sceptically. She tried to raise one eyebrow and gave up. She'd never been any good at it, probably never would be. He kissed her neck again before letting go. "So when did we decide that? And by 'we' I mean 'you'."

"Hey, come on," he protested, slipping some more bread into the toaster and handing her the ones that were already done. "It's not like it's a bad idea. And, anyway, Jack said it would be a good idea. Aren't you going to be tired enough?"

Belinda couldn't disagree so she just 'harrumphed'. She turned and leaned on the counter, sipping her tea and staring at him. He was putting butter and jam on his toast, a slight smile on his lips. He could feel her looking at him and he looked at her quizzically. She just shook her head, humming again. She seemed in a good mood, despite everything that was going on.

"So anyway, did you want to go visit your mum after school? If you're up to it, I mean."

"Yeah, I kind of need to see her. You never know," she said, trying to seem light-hearted. "She might have woken up by now."

"Hey, she's going to be fine," Keith said, wrapping his arms around her.

"How do you know? I mean, what if she isn't okay? What- what if she's got worse and I've just been messing around, not bothering to check on her-"

"Hey, I would hardly call what you went through messing around. Jesus Belinda, you were unconscious. Not exactly your fault. Which reminds me, I owe you an apology."

"For what? Oh, yes, I know, jumping in after me and pulling me out. Oh damn you Keith James, for saving my life. Damn you to heck."

"It wouldn't have needed saving if I'd just listened to you," Keith said quietly, his arms tensing. "God, if you hadn't woken up..."

Belinda laughed uneasily. "But I did. I woke up and everything's fine. Everything is fine, isn't it?"

"That depends," Keith said slowly, loosening his grip slightly. He felt her hands tighten on his arms and he forced her to turn around to look at him. She looked up at him, biting her lip. "What do you consider 'fine'?"

"This." She reached up and kissed him before she could change her mind, her arms stretching up around his neck. She was nervous and she wasn't sure if she was doing it right but she wanted to kiss him so badly. She felt a rush of joy when he kissed her back, his arms tightening around her again.

As he pulled away she let her eyelids flutter open, looking up at him from under her eyelashes. His eyes were half closed, his lips still reaching for hers a little and his forehead leaning against her own. His breathing was ragged and one of his hands was halfway up her cami-top. She held her breath waiting for him to say something, anything.

"Um, well, I wouldn't consider that just 'fine'," he murmured. "But I would definitely like to make it something more regular."

Belinda smiled as his lips pressed back onto hers, soft and sweet. They were interrupted when someone squeaked in the kitchen doorway before rushing out again. Belinda looked towards the door guiltily and then back at Keith. He sighed, pulling completely away and running a hand through his hair.

"I should probably go and make sure she's okay," he mumbled. "It's not like any little sister wants to walk in on her brother making out with someone..."

Belinda grinned shyly before turning back to her mug of tea. "Keith! Ugh, cold tea!" Keith chuckled as he made his way to Maggie's room, knocking lightly on the door. He heard her squeaky 'come in' and pushed the door lightly. She was bright red and he couldn't help but smile gently at her.

"Hey kiddo, you okay?"

"Um, yeah, I'm fine," she muttered, the blush spreading down her neck. "I'm going to go ahead and assume you're at least a little better than okay. You know, if what I saw in the kitchen was anything to go by..."

"Mags! Have a little shame!"

"What, me?!" Maggie scoffed, giggling. "I'm not making out with somebody at six in the morning!"

Keith blushed and stuttered, trying to come up with a good excuse before giving up and smiling sheepishly. Their conversation moved onto lighter - not to mention easier - topics. Eventually Belinda came and told them both to hurry up and get ready, smiling brightly. They waited until Keith was out of the room to start talking.

"So, when did that happen? Before or after he came back?"

Belinda blushed, mumbling slightly before hastily changing the subject.

"Is Tammy okay? Have you fed her yet, or do you need me to go get her a new bowl? That one's got to be getting a little dirty..."

After about ten minutes Belinda wandered back to her room, stumbling through the process of getting ready. She couldn't believe Maggie had walked in on that this morning - she could hardly believe it had

happened! But...she was just glad things were finally on the up again. She had never dreamt that something like this could happen. And Keith was just...wow. Every time he kissed her it was like something was burning inside of her, intense and terrifying but intoxicating.

Chapter 16

I Can't Give Him Up... - Part 16

[Whoop! It's not been too long since I last uploaded, so not too guilty! Seriously, though, can someone please tell me if my new idea is complete and utter b*ll*ocks? I need to know whether I'm going to put it up later or not. If the idea should be scrapped, tell me before I waste more time on it. Okay, so here's the next part! Comments please? Happy Reading ^_^]

"Hey Jack," Maggie sang out, running up to him. "Belinda's riding with Keith. So I guess I'm with you!"

"Oh, and why is Belinda riding with Keith?" Jack asked, mock-innocently.

"It might have something to do with them making out in the-"

"Okay Maggie, I think you know better than to gossip about others," Keith said severely, going pink. "Look, can we just get going? We're going to be late."

The ride to Maggie's school was quiet and Belinda was getting nervous. Jack was bound to say something once Maggie was safely out of earshot. He didn't disappoint.

"So...making out in the...what exactly? Or is this something I shouldn't be asking about?"

"Shove off Jack," Keith muttered, going red again. Belinda was half tempted to laugh at the conversation. It was like Jack was being the protective brother, making Keith squirm for getting a little...personal with Belinda. The more she thought about it, the more hilarious the situation seemed. She tried to smother her giggles but was having trouble - keeping hold of Keith was what was stopping her falling off backwards.

"Belinda? You going to tell me? Or am I going to have to torture one of you later? I haven't decided who yet," he added mildly, letting himself roll to a stop in front of the bicycle shed.

"Nothing much to tell," Belinda said, a giggle escaping as she climbed off of Keith's bicycle. "I mean," she corrected hastily when she saw Keith's raised eyebrows. "It's...not really your business?"

"Yeah, yeah, whatever. I'm getting it out of one of you later. And seeing as Keith is in one of my classes..."

"It's not going to be me," Belinda said confidently. "You would find that a little too awkward, Jack. And now, I have registration so I'll catch you guys at break."

Waving her goodbye, Jack turned to Keith. Keith ignored him, hoping for a little more peace but he just wasn't in for a peaceful morning. Emma was already making her way over, her little eyes narrowed.

"Hi Keith," she said, voice purposeful and falsely bright. "I see Belinda's back. Did she make you give her a lift?"

"Uh, no, I offered," he said, carefully avoiding Emma's grasp. He didn't like it when she clung to him, refusing to let go.

"But- But why?" She seemed really confused. Keith was wondering how he could tell her when Jack piped up, smiling icily at Emma.

"Well, it sort of made sense. I mean, you'd want your boyfriend to give you a lift to school if he could, wouldn't you?"

Emma seemed to be stunned into silence. Keith couldn't help but grin a little when Jack had said 'boyfriend'. He honestly hadn't thought of it like that. He'd known that he liked Belinda and it had been bliss to find out the feeling was reciprocated but - it wasn't like everything was perfect, just like that. He had assumed they would date (eventually) but he wondered what Belinda thought of being boyfriend-girlfriend. He hoped she would just blush and stutter, smiling that dazzling smile of hers.

"Then why wasn't she riding on your bike Jack?" Emma said, her cool facade slipping slightly. "Because you guys certainly seemed...close, last half-term."

"Hmm, I suppose you wouldn't understand what it's like for a girl and a guy to be friends without being like that, would you," he said, more of a statement than a question. "Fortunately, both me and Belinda know that we're just friends. So does Keith, just, you know, FYI."

"Oh come on," Emma scoffed, snorting derisively. "Do you honestly expect me to believe that, after never having a girlfriend and having every girl drool after him, Keith would choose that nobody over everyone else? Please. Anyone with more than three brain cells would know better than to go out with that reject."

"Um, right here," Keith interjected, waving his hand in front of her. "And she's not a nobody. Her name's Belinda. And yeah, she is my girlfriend. Come on Jack, we're going to be late."

Keith ignored the whispers he was leaving behind him, loping into the building and wishing Belinda

had been around to confirm it with him. It would have been nice to hear her call him her boyfriend. Still, at least he knew word would get around to her by break time. Gossip was big and when it concerned Emma, she was likely to spread it as fast as she could.

* * *

Belinda sat staring out of the window, trying to think of what she could do. She could get Keith to catch her up in maths - and maybe a couple of other subjects - but it would be unfair to ask him to teach it all to her. Maybe Jack could help out too...and maybe she could catch up with the rest on her own. Two weeks wasn't that much of a workload. Keith had caught up in his classes and he had been gone two or three months.

Belinda jumped when a shadow fell across her desk. Standing above her was a livid Emma, red-faced and narrowed eyes. Belinda was about to say something when the bell rang, making Emma sit down in her seat, shooting daggers at Belinda. Besides being amused at the oddity, Belinda was curious. What had she done to deserve that? She was still pondering that when the bell rang and she had to get up to get

to maths. She felt a jolt of happiness as she realised she could sit with Keith today and she wouldn't have to feel too embarrassed.

Emma stopped her as she tried to go through the door. Her arms were folded across her chest and she was glaring frostily at Belinda. Resigning herself to listen, Belinda looked pointedly at her watch. If possible, Emma's eyes narrowed even more.

"Oh I'm sorry Belinda," she snapped, no pretence of friendliness. "I just need a quick word about what the hell is going on between you and my Keith."

"Excuse me?" Belinda snorted, her eyebrows raised in disbelief. "I think you'll find that that's my Keith, and if you dare start this with me, make it some other time. I have a lesson to get to."

Pushing past a shocked Emma, Belinda felt a small sense of triumph. She had never felt so...in control. Emma was going to learn not to mess with her, however hard a lesson she wanted to make it. She was still smirking when she stepped into the maths class and spotted Keith watching her. The smirk melted into a real smile and she sat next to him,

grinning ear to ear. She could see a couple of Emma's friends start to whisper but she really didn't care. Having Keith next to her was enough to assuage any fears.

Chapter 17

I Can't Give Him Up... - Part 17

[Whoop! Thirty-one fans! I'm amazed. I feel really loved! So, here's another part with Belinda and Keith! ^_^ I love writing about them because it's so...innocent! I hope you enjoy it and - even if you don't - please comment! Happy Reading ^_^]

"Hey, there guys," Belinda called, bouncing up to the table. It was finally lunchtime and she was starving and tired. She had been getting strange looks all day, whispers following her from lesson to lesson and awkward silences when she entered them. The only people who didn't treat her oddly were Keith and Jack. "How's it going?"

"Bel-in-da-a," Jack whined, drawing out the syllables in her name. "Keith's being mean to me again. Make him quit it."

"You're his best friend," Belinda said mildly while dropping into the seat next to Keith. "You tell him. What's he been doing?"

"Yeah, we're best friends but your his girlfriend, so he's more likely to listen to you."

Belinda just sat there. Keith cursed Jack for saying it like that. He'd been hoping to get her on her own at home and actually ask her out before anything major happened. But now it was too late to take it back and he just had to hope Belinda wouldn't contradict him too loudly.

"So? You've known him longer," Belinda said finally, dragging Keith out of his little panic attack. Did she just...agree? Keith thought dumbly. Rather than leaving it to chance, Keith threw a cautious arm around her shoulders, pulling her into a hug. "Are you okay, Keith? What's up?"

"Nothing," Keith said, grinning madly. "I just...I wanted a hug. Why, am I not allowed one?"

"Don't be stupid. Of course you can. It's just not like you to do that."

"Okay, this isn't awkward for me at all," Jack complained, pouting at Belinda. "Can't you do that sort of stuff when you're on your own?"

"Oh, yeah, I guess so," Belinda conceded, resting on Keith's shoulder a little. "I'm really tired though. And I can't rest on the table without getting weird looks from random people. Oh yeah," she said suddenly, remembering. "Did something happen this morning? After I went in, I mean. Everybody keeps looking at me freakishly."

"Don't worry about it," Jack and Keith chorused, exchanging amused glances. "It's nothing, really. Just Emma making a scene," Keith reassured, starting on his lunch.

"Hey, Jack, what're you doing this weekend?" Belinda asked, mildly curious. "Because we've still got that

thing to sort out, you know. And I figure we should have you over to help plan it out."

"Um, I don't think I've got anything planned. But...could you two come over to mine? I don't really want Maggie to get involved any more than she already is."

Both Belinda and Keith agreed that it would be smarter to keep her safe and sound so they arranged it so that Keith and Belinda would get there about midday and then they would try to work out what to do next. When the bell rang for their last lesson, Keith picked up Belinda's bag for her, trying to be gallant. He almost dropped it again - it was so heavy!

"Whoa, what're you keeping in here, bricks? Dude, no wonder you're tired!"

"It-it's nothing! Give it over! It's not that heavy."

"Yes it is! No, you're not carrying this, no way. You want to visit your mum tonight, right?" he asked, looking at her sternly. "Well then, it's not a problem. Plus, you've been asleep for the last two weeks. You're not used to having a full day any more."

"Guys? Can we get moving before we're late? We've got English..."

* * *

"What if she's worse than last time?"

Belinda was panicking, like usual. Keith rolled his eyes and tugged her along with him, opening the hospital doors like the gentleman he was trying to be. And usually was in Belinda's eyes. She resisted a little, trying not to get dragged into something she was scared of.

"Come on, you really want to see her. Anyone can see that. And she's probably missed you."

"She's not awake yet, I know it! How can she miss me when she doesn't even know when I'm there?!"

"Hey, just because she's in a coma doesn't mean she can't hear you."

"Uh, Keith? Did you forget? I was in one too! I know what it's like. It isn't like you know what's going on around you. It's...just blank," she finished, shuddering. Keith pulled her into a hug, squeezing

her tightly before steering her in the direction of the ward her mum was on.

"Come on, you need to see her. You won't forgive me if I let you wander off now. It's not like she's - gone. She's still there, which means she's fighting to stay alive. So, let's go see her."

Belinda finally gave in and tentatively opened the door to her mother's room. She went and sat rigidly next to her mum, taking her hand automatically. She heard Keith murmur something about getting a hot drink before kissing her gently on the top of her head. She was glad that he was being sensitive to the fact that she needed some alone time with her mum but she wished he would stay with her so she could cry on him. She needed to cry it out and...well, Keith would understand her, reassure her, hold her.

She started sobbing quietly when she thought she felt a little pressure on her fingers. She held her breath, biting back sobs. Had she imagined it or...she squeezed lightly on her mum's fingers, praying that her mum would squeeze back. Oh please, she thought desperately. Let her squeeze back.

She felt that light pressure on her fingers again and started sobbing with relief. She waited for a moment, watching her mum's eyelids flicker until she saw the cool brown underneath them. Lizzie looked like she was in pain, aching but awake. Belinda held herself back instead of hurling herself into her mother's arms. It was okay now - the only thing left to deal with was Andrew...

"Sweetie? Where am I darling? What's..."

"Oh mum, you've been in a coma for a couple of months," Belinda sobbed back, clutching the hand, that was warming to her temperature, even more tightly. "Oh mum, I've missed you so much..."

Keith was coming back to the room when he spotted someone waiting outside of the room. He didn't recognise them instantly, assuming they were a relative, concerned for both Belinda's and her mother's well being. As he approached, the person turned to look at him and he gasped. His hot drink fell from his hand, splashing his feet and soaking his shoes. He didn't care. What the hell was Andrew doing here?!

[Bom-bom-boooomm! Yeah, another cliffhanger...^_^ comment!]

Chapter 18

I Can't Give Him Up... - Part 18

[Okay. Cliffhanger was mean. But, I was thought it would be kind of mean to put these two parts up as one. You'll get what I mean when you read it. I'll talk again at the end so, Happy Reading! ^_^]

Keith panicked, his hands drawing immediately on the warmth in the air. He couldn't let Andrew get hold of Belinda or her mum. He just couldn't. Belinda deserved to be left out of this, to be given that small amount of peace. As he felt the charge almost giving way to full blown flames, Andrew lifted a finger to his mouth, pointing into the room. Keith approached cautiously, not letting go of the flames.

"What are you doing here? Just what the hell is goin-"

He broke off sharply as he saw what was going on in the room. Belinda was facing away from him but he could see the woman sitting up in the bed, stroking Belinda's head. Keith forgot all about Andrew - only for a moment - as he felt that rush of gratitude at Belinda finally getting something back. Finally someone up there was paying attention to her. Keith let the feeling settle in before turning back to Andrew and ruining it.

"That doesn't tell me crap all about you being here. Now just what the hell is going on? I swear to God Andrew, don't even try to do anything to Belinda."

"Oh? And you're going to stop me, are you? Now, now, Keith! You wouldn't want me to take that dare seriously, would you? Because you know how I love a challenge. And that bitch deserves what she's got coming to her."

Keith started towards Andrew, rage burning in his eyes. Andrew watched calmly for a second before clicking his fingers and then he disappeared. Keith looked around wildly, hoping someone else had seen

Andrew there but the hallway was deserted. Not even a nurse was in sight. Keith relaxed a little until he heard Belinda screaming her lungs out.

Even as he entered the room he knew Andrew wasn't in there. This was a different type of screaming to what she had screamed last time. But she was definitely scared of something. Looking at her he could see exactly what it was. He rushed forward, trying to shield Belinda from what was happening.

Lizzie was jerking about in the bed, her whole body moving for apparently no reason. Her eyes were rolling back, her hands knotting in the sheets and thrashing epileptically. Keith kept calling for a nurse but, as he had just seen, nobody had been out there. All he could do was hold Belinda as she sobbed and cried, begging somebody, anybody to stop it, whatever 'it' was.

Lizzie finally lay still but it was an absolute stillness. Keith swallowed back the vomit that was trying to make it's way out - Belinda needed him. He had barely known the woman on the bed but Belinda had been raised by her. Belinda had relied on that tiny

hope that her mother would be there, unconditionally loving her from the sidelines. Some part of her had probably expected her to wake up one day and come home. And now...

Finally, a nurse came hurtling into the room, took one look at the body on the bed and ordered Keith and Belinda out, calling for help as she started to attempt artificial respiration. As Keith dragged Belinda out, orderlies and doctors rushed in, shouting things that made no sense. Belinda was clinging so desperately to Keith, crying and burying herself in his arms, saying that it was time to wake up - that she had to wake up.

"Oh Belinda, oh God, I'm so sorry. Oh Belinda..." Keith just kept repeating it, as though it could protect her somehow. He pressed his lips to her head, rocking her in his arms and holding her just as tightly as she was holding him. He wished there was something else he could say, anything to ease the pain she must be feeling. He imagined what it would be like to lose his mother and he held her even more tightly.

Slowly, Belinda's sobbing subsided to silent crying. The tears just didn't seem to stop but she tried to stop making those horribly depressing sounds. Her hands fell from Keith's back, arms exhausted. His didn't loosen and Belinda was grateful. She needed to be held, needed someone to be there now that her mum wasn't. She held back the crushing feeling that threatened to consume her and closed her eyes as she leaned into his chest.

Keith felt the weight of her, the tenderness with which she held him back. He had no clue what to do, no idea what could save her from this. All he could do was hold her and try to share her pain. He wasn't sure it would even be enough, wasn't sure she would be able to get over this. He hated that she was suffering so much, for something that wasn't her fault. She didn't deserve this and it was killing him that he didn't know what to do to protect her from Andrew.

He felt as she fell asleep, exhausted by everything on top of having a full day at school. He supported her, lifting her into his arms and cradling her against his

chest. He let her rest on his lap as they waited for a doctor to come and tell them the bad news. He wished he could let her sleep through what the doctor was going to tell her but he knew she needed to know for sure. She would need the confirmation.

[Okay, it was mean what happened to her but! Not everyone can have a happy ending. I know, mean of me for doing that to her RIGHT AFTER SHE WOKE UP. But I'll explain it eventually, I swear. Eep! I'm a little afraid to put up the next part...]

Chapter 19

I Can't Give Him Up... - Part 19

[Another chapter! I really am going to bring it to a close soon, I promise. But I thought I would put this up, so you can see a bit of Belinda's life and get why she's the way she is! Enjoy, comment and!...Happy Reading ^_^]

Belinda sat rigidly in her room, staring at the walls. She was gone. She was really gone. She stifled a sob, hugging her pillow. She had been awake most of the night, crying and thinking. She hated that she couldn't stop crying, hated to see how much it hurt Keith. She knew he cared, enough at least that seeing her in pain made him hurt too. She wished she could put on a brave face, ignore all that pain and hate.

Because she hated that her mum had left her here. She hated that she had no family to grieve with, to share that pain. She hated that the world was still moving, still spinning on that stupid axis. Why couldn't it just stop? Why didn't the world give her a pocket to slip into, to get the grief and pain out of her system before she started doing everything she had to again.

But most of all she hated the loneliness. First her dad had left her and her mum. That had nearly killed Lizzie, to know that he was never coming back. Belinda could remember how Lizzie had thrown herself into her work and so many different guys. The guys had all been a little sleazy. They were mostly alright but Belinda knew there was something weird about them. It was something Belinda never understood and hoped she never did.

Then, when her mum was done with all the guys, done with working overtime, she had turned to drugs. Belinda had found her a couple of times, stoned out of her mind and experimenting with lots of different drinks. It had been difficult for Belinda to

understand what was happening - she was only eight. Looking back, Belinda knew there was nothing she could have done but she still hated her helplessness.

When her mum was finally clean again, Belinda had realised that they didn't have enough money to keep buying Belinda clothes every time she grew a little more. When her clothes had become a little tight, a little short on her, Lizzie just tried to stretch them. It had been embarrassing to go to school in shapeless clothes and tattered shoes but it had been better than nothing.

It had changed again when Belinda had started slitting her wrists. Never where anyone could see clearly, had they gotten close enough. But enough for her mum to pay attention. Lizzie had broken down, begging Belinda to stop. It had been enough to slow Belinda down but not enough to stop her. She was starved for attention and if that was the only way to get it...

Again, looking back she saw how stupid it was. But she had been a lonely child, neglected and bullied. So

she had gone through insane things to get the attention she needed. Belinda wished she could turn back and told her mum how much she loved her. Maybe if her mum had known, she wouldn't have overdosed. Maybe she would have stayed around for Belinda.

It had been embarrassing the night before, the way she had clung to Keith. It would be more embarrassing to open up to him and she was dreading it. She knew he deserved the explanation and she wanted to be able to tell him everything. Nobody could ever mean as much to her as Keith did then. She didn't want to scare him away with everything 'dirty' inside of her, everything nobody wanted to see. She wanted him to stay, to love her. She-

"Belinda?" Keith said, knocking lightly on her door. He mustn't have known she was awake or he would have come in as he knocked. He tapped on the door again before nudging the door slightly. Belinda looked up at him with red eyes and he felt his

stomach shredding. God, why her? he thought. Why can't you give her some peace?

"Hey," she whispered gently, curling her legs underneath her. She patted the space she had just made, ignoring the sudden thump her heart gave when he sat closely beside her. She cuddled up to him, holding onto him. Her hands were shaking with fatigue but she didn't care. She needed him here, needed to talk to him. She wanted someone to tell her it was okay, even if it was a lie. She wanted Keith.

"Do you think you should stay home today?" Keith asked gently. He wasn't probing. He was asking honestly if she thought she should stay home. "You didn't get much sleep last night, did you," he chided, hugging her tightly. She fit so snugly in his arms, like they were made to hold her. He wanted to believe she was. "I should've stayed with you."

"No, there's no point in us both losing sleep," she murmured, feeling safer now that he was here. "Besides, I'm okay now. I just...I needed some time alone. But I'm okay now."

Keith sighed, stroking her back. He knew she was lying. It was so obvious that she wasn't okay, was barely holding herself together. But if that's what she needed, that was what he would damn well give her. He wouldn't make her cry, not if he could help it. Looking down into her eyes, he wondered if she would ever be alright again.

"Keith, I-" she broke off as his lips pressed onto hers. And then she lost herself in him again.

Chapter 20

I Can't Give Him Up... - Part 20

[Okay, part 20! Wow, this sequel is so much longer than the other two! Oh well, like I said, I'm going to draw it to a close. I know lots of people were upset because Lizzie died (YES SHE REALLY DID) so I'm sorry for that. But, um, think of it as character building. Yeah. That works. >_< So...Enjoy, comment and Happy Reading! ^_^]

Keith left Belinda asleep in her room when he started to get ready for school. She had muttered something vague about school but he knew she hadn't slept. It wasn't fair to force her to go to school when she wouldn't make it through the day. And that didn't

even include the Emma problem. Just thinking about Emma made him worry.

He was careful when he woke Maggie, trying not to make too much noise. He wondered vaguely if it would wake Belinda anyway - she had seemed so dead to the world when he had laid her down. A complete contrast to when he kissed her...he tried to pull himself away from those thoughts. He had to get ready for today, to tell Jack what Belinda was going through.

That changed his train of thought, though not for the better. Throughout yesterday, he had wondered if there was something more to Belinda and Jack's relationship, something less innocent than it looked. Just occasionally, a smile would pass between them, some shared joke that Keith didn't get and seemed to make no sense. But, then again, there were times like this morning...

Despite his best intentions, Keith could tell his mind was determined to wander along much less innocent avenues than planning for the day ahead. He decided to give in and let his mind wander while it could - it

wouldn't be long before he would have to concentrate solely on the tasks ahead. Maybe if he could just get it out of his system...

"Keith, is Belinda coming to school today, or is that wishful thinking?" Maggie asked, eyes sad and slightly red. Keith sighed and pulled her into a brief one-armed hug.

"She's tired this morning. She didn't really sleep last night, you know," he said, trying to make her understand without saying anything blatantly obvious. Maggie looked like she was taking Lizzie's death just as hard as Belinda was. "She just needs to sleep today, without worrying about school. I'll catch her up when she's ready, okay?"

Maggie nodded in assent, making her way around the house, collecting schoolbooks and pens before sitting down on the sofa, looking bored and lost. She knew Belinda needed space and time but all Maggie wanted to do was cry and share that grief. She wished she was strong enough, like Keith, to sit with Belinda and not cry, but she wasn't. And going to Belinda was more for her own comfort than anything

else, more to let out her own pain and frustration at her inability to do anything to help.

If only she was big enough to make a different. If only she were old enough to give Belinda some real support. If only, if only, if only...her brain was torturing her with 'what if's and all Maggie wanted was to go to Belinda and cry, good and hard. She hated that Keith had bags under his eyes from trying to hold Belinda together. She hated that nothing she did could make a difference.

"Hey, Jack's going to meet me at the school, so I'll give you a lift, okay? I'm just going to check on Belinda and we'll get going."

Even as Keith entered her room he knew that Belinda was fast asleep. She looked so vulnerable, lying there defenceless. Keith was tempted to lie down with her and stay all day. But Maggie needed a lift to school, Jack was expecting an explanation and it wouldn't be fair to expect Belinda to tell him, not when she couldn't hold herself together long enough to leave her room without crying.

So, reluctantly, Keith kissed her forehead before leaving her room on feet as soft as a cat's. He let Maggie climb on his bike, making sure she was steady before taking off. He wanted today to be over as quickly as possible so he could get back to Belinda and protect her again. Everything he thought about made him think about Belinda and when he thought about Belinda, everything else just went out the window.

As he left Maggie at her school, he tore full speed to get to his own as soon as possible. He hoped that the sooner he got there, the sooner it would be over. He had the feeling today was going to be excruciatingly slow, at best when he pulled up at the school with bags of time to spare. He sighed, trying to seek Jack out from the crowd but not seeing him anywhere. But he did spot Emma, headed his way. He sighed, frantically looking for Jack again. No luck.

"Hey Keith, where's Belinda?" Emma said, bouncing on the balls of her feet. Her apparent good mood was unnatural. "Or is she coming in with Jack?"

"She's staying home today. She isn't feeling very well."

"Oh, what a shame," Emma simpered, pushing herself closer to him. Keith took a hasty step back before finally spotting Jack.

"Oh, look, there's Jack. I better go talk to him."

Beating a hasty retreat, Keith raced over to Jack, hoping he wouldn't disappear inopportunely again. He caught up with him as Jack started to make his way into the building. He smiled briefly, apologising for not having him around that morning. Jack was much more interested in knowing what was wrong with Belinda to be bothered by such trivial matters. Keith hesitated before telling him. He knew Belinda would want Jack to know so he didn't spare any details, like he did with Maggie.

"Oh God, is Belinda okay?" Jack said, his face pale and his eyes wide. "I just...I don't think I really think this is happening. I mean, I know Andrew's evil and everything but...isn't there some kind of limit? Why is this always happening to her? This just isn't fair..."

Keith agreed, before falling deep into his own thoughts. He needed to plan for what to do next. He tried to concentrate on his schoolwork and Jack, all day, but his mind kept wandering back to Belinda, asleep and alone in the house. He was suddenly overwhelmed by terror - what if Andrew went after her while she was asleep and defenceless? The thought was almost enough to propel him from his seat, right there in the middle of science.

He held himself back, barely and tried desperately to convince himself that she was safe. There was no way for him to check on her anyway. He wished he had made her come in now, so he would know she was safe, know that she wasn't being attacked in her sleep. He kept letting his gaze flick over to the clock above the whiteboard and it frustrated him how slowly the time was passing by. It seemed like an eternity had passed by the time the final bell rang, signalling the end of the day, and even then his teacher insisted on keeping everybody behind for a couple of excruciating minutes to explain the homework again.

When he was finally out of the classroom, he hurtled over to his bike, unlocking it in record time. He spotted Jack and waved briefly as he flew by him. He was pretty sure Jack would understand his urgency and why he needed so desperately to get back home. Even as he made the detour to collect Maggie he was itching to get home. It seemed to take Maggie much longer than usual to come out of her lesson and Keith had to go slower than he wanted to with her on the back so she didn't fly off.

When they were finally home, Keith leapt up the stairs two at a time before opening Belinda's door quietly. He sighed a breath of relief when he saw her, still curled up on her side, breathing rhythmically and smiling gently. He fell to his knees beside her bed, resting his head on the edge of her mattress. Now that he could see her, safe and well, he could see how obsessed he was. He let himself kiss her gently on the forehead before backing out of the room.

He let the door shut silently behind him before going back downstairs to talk to Maggie. He was contemplating making Belinda stay here with Maggie

on Saturday - it seemed like the safest option - but he knew that Belinda would want to be a part of whatever was happening. He didn't think she would appreciate being left in the dark when she was so much central to whatever Andrew was up to.

"She's not been murdered then," Maggie said lightly, a knowing look in her eye. Keith grinned back, able to joke about it now he knew she was safe. "Yeah, maybe you should take her to school with you so you don't freak out like that again. Besides, it's Friday tomorrow, she might be able to handle a full day."

"Mm." Keith wasn't sure about that. Maybe he could stay home with Belinda and keep himself calm like that...he tried to shake the appealing thought. He knew he needed to keep up with school and it wouldn't be fair to make Belinda miss another day when she was behind as well. "Yeah, that's probably the best idea. I'm going to go wake her up so she can get more sleep tonight." There was a knock at the door. "Go let Jack in, yeah? He's probably worried about her too."

Slipping back into Belinda's room, Keith let himself be a little louder. She stirred on the bed and Keith shook her gently by the shoulder. Her eyes flickered open hazy and dazed. She smiled as they fell on Keith and he couldn't help the answering smile.

"Morning sunshine," he whispered, leaning forward to kiss her. Wow. He could do that all day, just let himself be with her. There was nothing in the world he wanted more than that. But he pulled away, looking deep into her eyes as he leaned his head against her forehead. "Well, not really. But I'm glad you're awake."

"Me too," Belinda answered breathlessly. She was flushed and dazzled but she was sitting up, letting her feet fall lightly to the floor. They were about the same height now, faces level and equally flushed. Sitting so close to him, falling into those liquid blue eyes, Belinda felt that dangerous tug in her head that always made her lose herself in him. Those same eyes that were so deep, so endless that she could never come out of them on her own.

She vaguely recalled a time not long ago - or quite a while ago, being with Keith always made her brain go fuzzy - when she had felt so torn between Keith and Andrew. She had thought of it as standing at the edge of a cliff, somebody pulling her to safety and one pulling her over the edge. Before Keith had come back, she had assumed Andrew was the one trying to pull her off the cliff, straight into the mouth of hell and that Keith was trying to save her.

Looking into his eyes now, she was painfully aware of the fact that it was Keith who had been pulling her over the edge. But not into the mouth of hell. No, it was more like he was pulling her down with him, spiralling into something scary but exhilarating. And the sensation of falling, of losing herself to something so much bigger than herself was no longer terrifying. She wouldn't avoid that feeling any more and she certainly wouldn't try to stay on that cliff.

Chapter 21

I Can't Give Him Up... - Part 21

[Okay, before everyone gets mad at me for waiting so long to update, I have a reason! I've been getting busy, what with Uni only a week away, and my student finance (student loans for uni) not sorted, I'm freaking a little. No student finance = no uni. No uni = sad RainyDayGirl. Yeah. But here's the next part to I Can't Give Him Up... so enjoy! And, just so you know, I would be thrilled if you left comments. Just saying, it would probably be one of the highlights of my day. Happy Reading ^_^]

Jack knocked on the bedroom door, knowing that Keith was in there with her. If Maggie hadn't given him the heads-up he probably would have just burst

in on them, planning on comforting Belinda. And it sounded like they were talking about something serious. He heard Belinda say 'come in', her voice strong and clear. He entered to see Keith and Belinda sitting on the bed, Belinda curled up on Keith's lap.

He knew he should probably find it weird that they were dating but, to be honest, he was just relieved that Belinda was smiling. He grinned a 'hello' at Keith before turning sympathetically to Belinda. He would have hugged her if Keith wasn't holding her so tightly. Instead he just sank onto the bed next to them. There was a moment of awkward silence before Jack finally spoke up.

"Hey Bel. How're you holding up?"

She gave a sad little smile, leaning into Keith as the tears swam in her eyes again. She was barely holding back the sobs and Jack felt awful. His eyes met with Keith's briefly and Keith reluctantly let Belinda go so Jack could hug her too. Once Belinda had cried everything out again, Keith took her back into his lap and hugged her tight as they moved the conversation on to talk about Saturday.

"So, me and Keith will come over at about twelve and we'll leave Maggie here? Alone?"

"Oh, don't worry Bel," Keith said, smoothing her hair soothingly. He kissed her head, wanting her to understand. "Maggie's probably a lot better off not knowing what we're going to do about Andrew. She'd only want in so we can't talk about it near her. Ears like a bloody cat."

"I know but..." she couldn't shake that stupid feeling again. But it wasn't like it usually meant anything. She'd only ever been right about it when it was happening right then. And not even all the time. "Okay, so we leave her here for the day. Won't she be a little pissed when she knows we did this without her?"

"Better her angry than hurt, right?"

Belinda agreed grudgingly, exhausted again. She decided that she would cross bridges as they came instead of trying to bang her head against an insurmountable wall. She was vaguely listening to Jack and Keith but it was difficult to get interested when they were being so quiet. She sighed, hugging

herself closer to Keith. She didn't care if she was being clingy. Right then, all she needed was someone to hold her back.

"Is she okay?" Jack asked, worried when Belinda slumped in Keith's arms. "She's not, you know, having a fit or something, is she?"

"Nah, she's just tired. She keeps falling asleep and then waking up. Don't worry, when she's used to being awake during the day she'll find it easier."

"Oh. So," he said, sure Belinda was asleep. "Why didn't you tell me? I would've liked to know if you liked someone."

"Well, I kind of- I mean, you two were really stuck together and- look, I fixed it, didn't I?" Keith blustered, blushing but defiant. "And now everyone knows, so it's not so major, is it?"

"Yeah, I guess. It's just...weird. I mean, I can see that she likes you just as much and it's obviously good for her. But...I don't even know how you know each other, not really. Belinda always sort of glossed over that."

"Oh, that," Keith muttered, reluctant. He didn't want Jack to know what had gone on when he had been such an ass. And if Belinda hadn't said anything, she obviously hadn't felt like sharing either. "I just- it was pretty obvious that Andrew was a genie and- I mean, does she really look like the type who can take care of herself?"

"I guess not," Jack agreed, wondering if there was more to the story that Keith was telling. "So - what? You just decided to go all heroic? Man that's corny."

"Yeah, I know. But I really do like her. I don't even know why I like her. I mean, she's just so...different from everyone else."

"Different is usually a good thing. I mean, imagine if she was like Emma!" Jack shuddered, trying to shake the image of Emma and Belinda, the best of friends and both totally evil. "Anyway, it wouldn't be good if she conformed. She's better being who she is."

"Oh, I know, I wasn't saying I wanted her to change, anything but. I'm glad she is who she is, I just wish I'd noticed her sooner."

Keith was still blushing, heat coming off of his cheeks. Jack chuckled, moving the conversation to other things until Belinda finally woke up again. Checking the time, Jack realised he had to go before his mum freaked out entirely. Hugging a sleepy Belinda goodbye, he left humming happily. He was glad Belinda had Keith to take care of her. She needed all the protection she could get, if he was completely honest.

"So, did I miss much?" Belinda asked Keith, her voice thick with sleep. "Or were you just talking about guy stuff?"

"Guy stuff," Keith admitted, smiling a little. "Nothing that interesting. Still tired then?"

"You have no idea. I swear, it's like someone suddenly made the days longer."

"That must suck," he said, kissing her forehead lightly. "Still, only one day to get through until the weekend and then we can get rid of the Andrew problem that is evidently stressing you out."

Belinda grunted sleepily laying her head against him. She was soon fast asleep, feeling perfectly safe in Keith's arms.

Chapter 22

I Can't Give Him Up... - Part 22

[Shout out to sondra, who sent me a message requesting this story! So, you get two parts because I was kind of writing it anyway. *Looks around shiftily*. Look, I said I was waiting for confirmation that it was wanted and I got it. Still focusing on The Beast Within as well, but this might be a bi-weekly story update now! Enjoy, COMMENT and...Happy Reading! ^_^]

Beep-beep-beep. Beep-beep-beep. Beep-bee-

Belinda rolled over, her hand reaching for her alarm clock. She jumped a little when her hand met solid, warm flesh and a squeak escaped her lips.

"Keith?"

"Mmf," Keith mumbled, wrapping his arms around her and pulling her close. Belinda let his warmth course through her for a minute before she extracted herself from his grip. He mumbled again before rolling over. Belinda could feel the giggles bubbling up so she left the room before she woke him up. She knew he couldn't have had much sleep the night before, not if she was squishing him. She blushed before making her way to the kitchen.

Pottering around in the kitchen, Belinda felt a wave of grief and nausea overtake her. It was as though something snapped and now, everything she had managed to hold back last night came crashing down on her, wave after unrelenting wave. She needed to grip the table as she doubled over, gasping as the tears cascaded down her face.

She collapsed to the floor sobbing with a hand covering her mouth. She waited, shaking and crying, for it to pass. It did, eventually, the sobs making way for laboured breathing and that, in turn, making way for shaky, desperate tears that slowed to a halt. She

sat like that for a while, staring at the kitchen around her. She didn't look up as the door swung open but she felt as Maggie started shaking her. Her eyes were frantic and wide and she was talking but Belinda couldn't make out the words, couldn't hear anything above the white noise.

She sat there, watching as Maggie left the room, her focus coming and going. She didn't like it, but she couldn't do anything to change it. She could only watch as it was all changing around her, Maggie coming back in, Keith coming, bleary-eyed, after her. His gaze quickly sharpened, when he saw Belinda's red eyes and the tear tracks. He ushered Maggie from the room before turning back to her, touching her face, upturning it, anxiety clouding his eyes.

"...nda! Belinda!!! Come on, snap out of it," Keith said, his voice slowly coming into focus. She looked up at him, face creasing. The tears kept going, her body starting to shake again. "Oh God, Belinda, come here. Belinda..."

He held her close, rocking back and forth. She cried again, burying her face in his neck. She was shaking

and there was nothing he could do to stop it, nothing he could do to keep her from breaking down. His arms wrapped around her, he tried to soothe her, to calm her breathing. His body was warm, sending heat through her veins and melted the ice that she was desperately constructing. His lips pressing against her forehead were like twin fires, searing her, making her weak.

"Keith."

He wasn't even sure he had heard it. She was so muffled against his skin that he couldn't tell if he was being wishful. But the brush of hot air against his skin was proof. The way her lips moved against his neck was all he needed to back away a little, give her some room. Her eyes were still red, still sore from the tears that waited. But they were alive - with pain, it was true - seeking his and praying silently for him to help her. Slowly, as though he was unsure, he bent his lips to hers.

They sat there for a while, kissing, but eventually he pulled away. He watched as her eyes flickered open. She was so vulnerable, so breakable. He jumped

when Maggie came back in and started making breakfast. She looked pointedly at the clock before turning deliberately away from them. Keith shook himself, starting to stand.

"Hey, Belinda, we've got to get ready, okay? Come on, we can talk properly later." His voice was low, his hands were helping her to stand. She was shaky but compliant. The silence was killing him.

It wasn't until Maggie was having her shower that Belinda spoke again.

"I'm sorry." Keith looked down at her bewildered. "I- It was- I'm just sorry. I should've just stayed in bed, with..." she trailed off, blushing the deepest red imaginable. She coughed, clearing her throat before looking up at him and grinning weakly.

"Hey," he said, pulling her into his arms again. "Hey, hey, hey. None of this is your fault. None of it. I'm here for you, so is Maggie, so is Jack. So just...when you need to cry, cry. I'll hold you, I'll...I'll do anything Belinda."

"I'm going to go get dressed then. I just...can you...can we do something, just us, once this is done. I...I need you. Please?"

He wanted to protect her from everything, right then. More than ever before, he wanted to save her any more agony she might suffer. He gripped her tightly, arms tightening around her tiny body. Nothing he did would ever make her okay again. She needed more than he could give but he needed her. She was like air to him; fresh, brisk and mischievous. He sought her lips, briefly, before nodding. He would agree to anything - anything - she wanted.

A while after that, Jack arrived and everything got hectic, so Keith didn't really get any more alone time with Belinda. But, knowing that Andrew would be dealt with gave him the burst of energy he sorely needed to see it through. Like Belinda had said, they needed to go on a real date when this was finally finished. And Keith really wanted that date...

It wasn't until they were at school that Keith really noticed anything going crazy. It was just little things, like the way nobody was talking. Really, everyone

was just staring at Belinda like she had a disease. Keith put his arm around her protectively, walking her all the way to registration. He didn't want her to know what was going on, not yet. So far, for the whole day she had been back, nobody had been horrible to her, or tried to bully her.

"Hey guys." Emma's voice came bouncing through the silence, cold and hard. "Belinda, I heard you were ill. Or at least, that's what Keith was telling everyone."

"Oh, no, I wasn't ill. Family stuff, you know?" Belinda replied, cool as a cucumber. Keith was the only one who knew she was shaking. "Not something I really want to talk about so could you maybe let me past?"

"Oh, no, don't tell me your mum bailed on you too! I mean, everyone knows she's not in hospital anymore." When Belinda looked up, confused, Emma sneered and gave a high tinkling laugh. "Oh, come on, it's not like it's impossible to know. Stacy's mum is a nurse. So, why're you still coming in with Keith?"

Belinda stared at her feet, feeling the tears and heat rush to her face. Jack immediately jumped to her defence.

"I thought you knew Belinda and Keith were dating, Emma. Or is it just because you're that jealous of her that you have to try make a scene?"

"Jack, it's okay," Belinda said quietly, forcing herself to look Emma in the eye. She knew Emma could see the tears and she saw the almost triumphant gleam in her eyes. "Yeah, my mum's not in hospital. But no, she's not at home. She's out because she's dead, Emma." Shocked gasps and whispers started spreading as the information sank into the crowds. Emma's face turned white with shock and she started spluttering until Belinda's voice cut through it. "And I don't appreciate you trying to be a bitch about it, just because you don't think I'm good enough for Keith."

Belinda broke away, tears streaming down her face. Keith felt his gut wrenching as people cleared a pathway for her and he hastily ran after her, disappearing into the building as well. Jack was the only one left to see as Emma, humiliated and

surprised, turned back to her own circle of friends who looked around uneasily before hastily making their own exits.

Chapter 23

I Can't Give Him Up... - Part 23

[Okay, second piece today! 'Nuff said. Enjoy, COMMENT (Pretty Pleases?) and...Happy Reading! ^_^]

Belinda broke down completely once she was past the door to an empty classroom. She heard the door open again and before she could turn around Keith was sweeping her into a hug, hushing her sobs. The sobs finally stopped and Belinda scrubbed the back of her hand against her eyes, trying to erase the traces of tears.

"Belinda, just ignore her," Keith murmured. Feeling her stiffen, he hastily continued. "I'm not saying she

should have done that, because she really shouldn't. And she will be getting hell for it, from both me and Jack. But, just for now, let it go so we can deal with everything else, okay? Because she's not important."

"I'm sorry," Belinda mumbled for what seemed the thousandth time that morning. "She's right, I don't deserve you. I'm not saying I think you shouldn't go out with me. Because there is no way in hell I will ever say that. But...I see why she knows I don't deserve you."

"Hey, she's not right. I mean, not unless you mean you don't deserve me the same way you don't deserve the rest of this crap happening to you."

Belinda giggled, resting her head against his chest. "Just don't decide you don't need me, okay?" she said quietly. He started to protest and she looked up at him, eyes pleading. "Hear me out, please. I'm not saying you're like that, because you're not. But...I need you right now, okay? Especially with all this other crap going on."

"I'm here as long as you want me Belinda, honest," he whispered, planting a kiss on her forehead. He was

about to kiss her properly when Jack burst in, making them break apart abruptly.

"Oh, hey," Jack said, going slightly red. "Um, I was just wondering if you two were okay. But, uh, I guess I'm just sort of in the way. Uh, yeah. Sorry." He turned to leave.

"Um, it's okay Jack," Belinda said, blushing again. "We were just...Keith was just...um, don't worry about it, anyway. Um, that's the bell."

She scooted off of the table scurrying for the door. Keith let her leave before grabbing his bag and turning to Jack. He knew Jack would be thinking the same thing as him long before he brought it up. In fact, it wasn't until they were in registration that Jack finally said something.

"You do know we're going to have to do something about her now that she's started in on Belinda, right? Because there is no way either of us is going to stand for that."

"Yeah," Keith agreed, getting angry now that Belinda wasn't in immediate danger of anyone bullying her.

"I can't believe...I mean, I know she would do it. But...doesn't it seem a little much? Shouldn't there be something going right in her life?"

"She's got you, hasn't she? And it's not like she's got a debilitating disease and she's not missing any appendages. She just has some seriously rotten luck."

"You think I'm good for her?"

"Well duh, of course you are," Jack said, looking at him like he'd just grown a second head. "I mean, she's almost always smiling around you. I mean, she was so closed off before you came back. And now...she smiles like she means it. It's still a little sad, but if you weren't here I think she might do something drastic."

Keith thought back to Belinda's diary and shuddered. It definitely would have been disastrous if she thought she didn't have anything. He didn't look at Emma at all in registration, in case he said something he couldn't take back. No, he would wait until he and Jack could get her on her own so he could shoot his mouth off.

"Anyway, now that she has you, I should start looking for a girlfriend so we can double. It'll be fun, you know?"

The whole way up until break time, Jack and Keith kept the conversation light-hearted and easy. But when Keith saw Belinda, cornered by Emma and her cronies, he felt all of his rage rush back to him. He stalked over, knowing that Jack was right behind him.

"...and I don't know who the hell you think you are, but you'd better watch your back, right? Because nobody gets away with dissing me like that. God, it's not like I knew about your mum. And I'm not even sure that's true, you were probably just aiming for the sympathy vote and when it's proved wrong you are going to be so emba-"

"What the hell are you talking about Emma," Keith said angrily, pushing his way over to Belinda. He turned towards her. "You okay?" When she nodded but wouldn't meet his eye, he turned back to Emma, anger making him reckless. "Just what the hell is your problem? Was it not enough for you to spread

stupid rumours about her when she was in a coma?" he demanded, voice hard. "Or is there something seriously wrong with you, that you have to make everything someone else's fault? Because I know Belinda didn't do anything wrong."

"Keith, I- it's not like that," Emma whined, throwing a quick glance around her friends, looking for back up. They started nodding vigorously, all chiming in. Emma grinned triumphantly. "See? Belinda started in on me, not the other way around. Are you sure you know your friend all that well? Because-"

"Girlfriend. I'm his girlfriend Emma," Belinda said sharply, blood rushing to her face as about ten pairs of eyes fell on her incredulously. Including Keith's and Jack's. "Emma, can I talk to you in private?"

Emma nodded, letting Belinda lead the way over to a quiet corner. Belinda smiled weakly at Keith before turning back to Emma.

"Okay Emma, cut the crap. I know you better than that, they know you better than that and Keith? Yeah, Keith has probably figured out all your stupid little games. So do me a favour and stay out of my face. I

will admit that it seems a little unlikely that Keith would be interested in me but I guess that's just proof that life is weird. So get off of my back and keep to being a bitch in private, okay?"

"Oh. My. God. You total bitch. Who the hell do you think you are? Keith, interested in you? Don't make me laugh. He's probably just using you for sex because he knows you'll be easy, as opposed to me, who will play hard to get for a couple of months."

"Well, he's not really getting any of that, so I don't see how that works," Belinda snapped back, letting the venom seep into her voice. "And you, hard to get? Chances are, you would jump at the slightest chance of him being in the same room as you. Everyone knows you slept with the first boyfriend you ever had and every single one since. So don't start that crap with me."

Without waiting for Emma to start bitching again, Belinda went back to Keith. He was already standing closer, waiting nervously to see if she would be crying again and he was relieved that it hadn't come

to that. When the bell rang a second later, Keith sighed.

"Damn, it's just not my day, is it? Oh well, maths next. Yay..."

Belinda giggled, leaning into him for support. She didn't like arguments at the best of times and now, with Emma...she was exhausted. She sighed. Today was going to be a long day...

* * *

It was only when they were getting ready to go home that Belinda ran into trouble again. She was climbing for Keith and his bicycle when Emma's friend Stacy came flouncing over. Belinda braced herself for what she knew had to be retaliation.

"I hope you're happy. Poor Emma's been in floods of tears after what you said to her. Yeah, she told me what happened. God, she was only trying to apologise and you freaking blew up like a freaking bomb."

"Um, Stacy, is it? Let's get something straight, okay? I don't have any problems with you. You seem fairly

decent and you've never bullied me like the other girls. Hell, I know you must be a nice person because you trust Emma so much. Plus, you weren't there at break. But I will not hesitate to slap you down just because you're nice. I have learned my lesson. Whatever Emma told you was a lie. Okay? I never said anything uncalled for and whatever she says went down, didn't."

"Oh, right, like I believe you. My mum told me all about how your mum was in the hospital for O.D.'ing and all that, so don't even start. I mean, I'm sorry about your mum and all, and I've seen you around too - you're not that bad. But I just can't stand it when someone picks on my best friend. So could you maybe ease off, because she's having a rough time, what with the guy she loves totally going off with someone else."

Belinda didn't miss the hint. She knew that Emma had been saying all kinds of things since she had been absent but it hurt that someone like Stacy - who everyone knew couldn't hurt a fly - would just believe that. She turned away, tears threatening to

make another appearance. She mumbled something incoherent before stumbling away.

"Hey, wait, don't- Belinda, wait!"

She didn't stop, despite Stacy's raised voice. She didn't stop when she got to the gates. She didn't even stop to cross most of the streets. She was so trapped in her own head that she didn't notice a lot of the traffic and bustle around her. It wasn't until she got back to Keith's house that she realised people must be worried about her. Hell, Keith would probably still be there waiting. Guilt warred with sorrow as she decided to trudge back to the school. It wasn't that far of a walk and it wasn't like she hadn't done it before...

"Belinda, there you are! I was really worried until Stacy came and told me you'd already left. Look, she's really sorry," he added gently, tipping her chin up to look into her face. "I've told her what really happened at break and she's mortified. She had no idea. She was going to come back with me but I told her I wanted to make sure you were okay. You are okay, right?"

His eyes searched hers for a long moment, falling into them. Her mask cracked and she tried to give a shaky smile, briefly, before it broke again, leaving only a desperately confused expression.

"Why can't they just leave me a-alone?" Belinda sobbed, wrapping her arms around him and burying her face in his chest. "I-I do-don't understand! Ev-everything's g-going to h-hell!"

Keith tried to hush her, helpless. He didn't expect everything to go perfectly, not with her kind of luck but damn it, couldn't one person other than him and Jack be on her side? He didn't know whether it was Andrew influencing people or just that everyone at school were immature little beasts, but he was determined to try and fix it.

"Belinda, are you okay?" came a small voice, behind Keith. He turned to see Maggie looking anxiously at the way Belinda was shaking. "What happened?" she demanded, staring pleadingly at Keith. "Did Emma do something again? God, that vindictive- that evil-ooh, I don't think there are words bad enough to describe her!"

"Mags," Keith muttered distractedly. He didn't need Maggie adding fuel to the fire. "Come on, let's go inside. You too Jack," he added, calling over his shoulder. Jack grinned and went around the back.

"Keith, you can let me go," Belinda mumbled but he decided to ignore that. She needed the support.

"So, what happened? I demand a straight answer Belinda."

"Mags...it's not that bad. I just- I've been sensitive today and it's a bit like rubbing in salt. I'm going to be just fine by tomorrow, you'll see. Right as rain."

Maggie looked at her dubiously but shrugged it off and hugged her tightly. She squeezed back, feeling how frail Maggie's arms were compared to Keith's. She shuddered but smiled brightly. She didn't want to think about how breakable Maggie was because she had to leave her alone tomorrow. It was a scary thought but she would have to.

"Keith, can we-" Belinda began but Jack cut her off as he pulled her into a strong hug. She jumped a little but hugged back tentatively.

"I have to go, but you make sure to come around bright and early tomorrow. Then we can organise something. Don't let what Stacy said get you down. She's really sorry for what she said and she's going to have a word with Emma as soon as she can."

"'Kay Jack. See you tomorrow."

Keith turned to her the moment Jack was out of sight. His arms blanketed her entirely and she felt safe in his arms. His forehead rested against hers, looking straight into her eyes. Her heart started beating crazily, like a humming bird's wings.

"Oh Belinda," he sighed, one of his hands coming up to cup her face. Their lips met, briefly, softly, before pressing harder, igniting flames Belinda had forgotten existed. He pressed her into the kitchen counter, wanting desperately to make her whole again. She was panting dizzily, growing softer in his arms as he kept pushing her gently further off of that emotional cliff. "Belinda," he murmured.

The kisses slowed until Belinda was looking into his eyes again. She sighed, burying her face in his neck. She wished it was always so simple - that everything

could be right when he kissed her like that. But she just wasn't that naive any more. And nothing was alright.

Chapter 24

I Can't Give Him Up... - Part 24

[Okay, HI GUYS!!! Sorry it has been such an uber long time since I updated! And I'm really sorry it's short! In my defence, I've had university (college to all you Americans) and that has been totally overloading my senses. And everything else (>.<). So please forgive me and comment! I LOVE the comments I get and I love that people bother! Happy Reading! ^_^]

It was the next morning that the bad feeling started again. It was only a small tingling now, nudging her and making it impossible to eat breakfast. She had woken up next to Keith again, his warm arms solid around her. She could feel his heart thudding through his thin t-shirt. She was grateful that he kept

her company but she wondered if she could really keep expecting him to help.

She made herself unwind, sipping at her tea. She watched the sun rising through the window, trying to pull her thoughts away from the coming day. If she had to leave Maggie alone, that was what she would do. Keith was back and he knew what he was doing - she hoped. She hadn't forgotten that last time he had tried to do something on his own he had ended up trapped in Andrew's world for three months.

Maggie was the next person to wake up and Belinda smiled gently at her, hoping that she wouldn't feel too left out when Keith and Belinda disappeared for the day. They chatted briefly about school and whatnot before Keith stumbled down the stairs at around ten o'clock. He kissed Maggie on the head before making himself some tea. His gaze kept flickering to the clock before flickering to Maggie and then back again. It made Belinda nervous just to watch him.

"Hey, Mags, me and Belinda are heading over to Jack's today, to help catch Belinda up on her

schoolwork. You can keep yourself busy for the day, can't you?"

"I guess," Maggie mumbled, looking slightly put out. "Can't you hang around today and do it tomorrow?"

"I think Jack's busy tomorrow. We can be around the house tomorrow I think. You could always take the chance to get the cat used to the rest of the house if you want."

Maggie's eyes lit up and made no more complaints, not even when Belinda and Keith left, her bright smile doing nothing to ease the panic currently taking hold of Belinda's body. It didn't lessen as Keith wrapped an arm around her shoulder, although the gesture definitely distracted her momentarily. She looked up at him, smiling.

"See, she'll be fine," Keith soothed, sounding confident enough to at least let her let his confidence override her hyper senses. She sighed, deliberately ignoring the constant nagging somewhere in her midriff. She refused to let the feeling pester her until they reached the bus stop. Slowly, as though it was a living thing, it grew until it was smothering her.

When the bus pulled up in front of them, Keith got on first, not doubting that Belinda would follow.

But even as she took that first step to the bus, it felt wrong. And then she was running back up the street, her feet pounding on the pavement. Her bag was heavy on her shoulder, biting into the skin as it rocked back and forth. She had to get back, had to be there in time for-

For what? part of her quizzed, though not loudly enough to stop her mad dashing towards the house. It took an agonisingly long time to unlock the door, her fingers fumbling over the different ones attached to her key fob. When she finally managed to slip inside, it was dangerously quiet. She could hear someone moving around the kitchen and she stepped gently, trying not to make a sound as she went.

As she rounded the corner into the kitchen, she could hear a soft 'miaow'ing and she very narrowly avoided stepping on Tammy. Her stomach took an instant drop. If Tammy was in the kitchen...where was Maggie?! Losing any carefulness, she started to search recklessly.

"Maggie?! Maggie, where are you?! Maggie?! Mag-!"

"Looking for something?" Andrew's cold voice cut through Belinda like a knife. She whirled to see him standing, completely aloof. "I'm afraid she's not here at the moment. Can I take a message for you?"

"What did you do with her?" Belinda demanded, ignoring the waver in her voice. "Give her back, now."

"Now, now, Bel, don't be irrational. I can't just hand her over! What would be fair about that? And I caught her, fair and square."

"Kidnapping isn't the same as catching. Now give - her - back."

Andrew smirked, flicking forward faster than Belinda would have believed possible and gripping her by both forearms. She gasped as his harsh brown eyes bored into hers, freezing her into place.

"No, and now I think I've caught you fair and square as well. And we shouldn't wait too long before we go - we wouldn't want Keith interrupting, would we?"

Belinda was having difficulty concentrating past the grey spots clouding her vision. And then she knew no more.

Chapter 25

I Can't Give Him Up... - Part 25

[Okay, I'm SO aware that I owe apologies! Life is VERY hectic at the minute, what with university coursework and assignment deadlines, and Christmas...throw a social life in the mix and you have a very belated next part to the story. I know I thought I'd manage better but it really is a nightmare keeping up with this uni stuff! So, I'm not sure how long until the next part but...Happy Reading! ^_^]

Keith hurtled through the door, cursing his stupidity. Of course he should have noticed how she was feeling. He was useless, never paying attention to her when she needed it. He barely noticed that the door was unlocked, open for him to hurtle through. But he

did notice the absence of sound. There was a rustling coming from the kitchen, but that was the only noise he could detect in the entire house.

"Maggie? Belinda?" he shouted, making his way through the house noisily. "Hey, guys, come on! Are you in here?"

He opened the door to the kitchen, carefully making sure that nothing nasty was going to jump out and take him out. But even as the door hit an overturned chair nothing attacked. The feeling of dread spreading, he located the rustling noise.

"Jesus, Tammy," Keith murmured, picking up the tiny creature. "Where's Maggie, Tam? Is she hiding?"

He looked around, slowly going mad inside. He knew Maggie wouldn't have left Tammy to roam around downstairs alone, not for the first time. And Belinda had come running back here so fast that there was no way she couldn't have been at home when he got here. The only logical conclusion was that...that... He shuddered, not wanting to think about it. His mind pinged frantically back and forth, wondering if there was any other explanation.

"Maggie?" He called out desperately, wanting more than anything to hear someone call back to him. "Belinda? Are you there? Belinda?!"

"They're not here."

Keith turned around so fast he thought his neck would crack. Standing in the doorway was Andrew, tall and sinister. He smiled at Keith, a smile that chilled him to the bones. "Where are they? What did you do with them? I swear to God, if you've hurt her-"

"'Her'? Don't you mean 'them'? Surely, you're not putting your girlfriend before your sister, are you? Because that would be insa-"

"Shut up and give them back. Now." Keith was seething, wanting to punch him more now than ever before. He could envision his fist going through Andrew's face, blood spurting and -

"Oh, come on now. I'm sure you wanted to punch me much more that time I kissed Belinda. And that time she and I went on a date."

"Look, I don't want to talk about this with you. I just want my sister and girlfriend back. And you gone would be another good start."

"Oh, because I'm terrified of you. Your girlfriend's scarier than you are!"

"Just. Give. Them. Back." Keith seethed, his fists shaking. He refused to sink into this conversation. He just wanted Belinda and Maggie home, safe and sound.

"Ah, now, therein lays the problem. I don't really want to. And you can't really say that Bel can be 'given back' can you. She's a person you know. And I really must go now, I think she wants to talk to me."

"Now wait a second-" Keith shouted, lunging forward as if to grasp hold of Andrew, who disappeared in a puff of smoke. "Come back here you-"

He went on to use some very colourful and unprintable words, until he finally gave in and sank onto the settee, head in hands. He fought back tears as the telephone rang and he reached to answer it. Jack's worried voice immediately filled his ears.

"Keith? Where are you guys? I'm waiting at the bus stop and the bus you were supposed to be on just left. You could have called to say you missed the bus you know."

"I-" he swallowed convulsively, trying not to let the tears overspill. "We were at the bus stop - hell, I got on the bus - and Belinda took off before I could stop her. I got back here about 10 minutes ago and Andrew- Andrew's got both of them. Jack, I- Jack, what do I do?"

"He what?! That's it, I'll be right over, okay? Don't go anywhere, don't move anything and don't do anything stupid. I mean it, let me get there first, okay? Good, I'll be right there."

Keith couldn't move as the dial tone sounded in his ear but he didn't care. Again. Every time he thought he was doing something right, everything flipped back on him and Belinda was the one in trouble. It wasn't fair on either of them, but especially not on Belinda. He wished he'd never got her involved.

Twenty minutes later Jack was slamming through the front door, breathless. He looked around frantically,

as though he might catch a glimpse of either Belinda or Maggie even though they were long gone.

"Wha...what's going...on? Where...did he...take them?!" Jack gasped, evidently trying to get his breath back. "Do you know? Where are...they?"

"I'm...I'm guessing he took them back to his world. I- I don't think they're in immediate trouble. He's just got them in hand for the minute. I'm worried though. He wouldn't have taken them if he didn't have a plan."

Chapter 26

I Can't Give Him Up... - Part 26

[Okay, so I'm quite proud that this is the second upload in as many days. Shout out to greenivy320 who left a comment on my last part! This chapter's mainly because I felt guilty for not posting often enough for the fans who want to read the story. Again, it's a short chapter but...please comment! And Happy Reading! ^_^]

"...linda. Belinda! Wake up! Belinda!"

Belinda awoke to frantic shaking. Her head ached and her body found muscles she didn't know existed to cause pain. She groaned and looked groggily around to see Maggie's face break into relief.

"Oh, thank God. Are you okay? What're you doing here?" Maggie's voice made the pounding in Belinda's head worse and she winced ever so slightly. "Wait, let me back up. Where does it hurt?"

"Uh, a little bit of everywhere I think. But forget about me. Are you okay? You've been here longer, right? Did he hurt you?"

"No, he just grabbed me. He smells weird but he didn't hurt me. You're the one he dragged in here looking dead! What did he do to you?"

Belinda thought back and vaguely remembered the way her vision had blanked. She didn't want to tell Maggie about that part at the very least. The mere memory of the stark fear that had encompassed her was enough to make her palms sweat and her stomach turn. She looked around, trying to distract herself. Her eyes grazed past the things she had seen last time; a house, tall and sinister with boarded windows and a door that laughed at her; a merry-go-round that creaked ominously as it span emptily; and that dreaded pool that had left her in a coma for several weeks. The water that had once churned so

frightfully stood deceptively still now that Andrew held no influence. Her bag sat to the left of her, closed and inconspicuous.

"Hey, Mags, did Andrew do anything to my bag or is it okay to touch it?"

"Um, he didn't do anything to it. He looked like he was in a bit of a rush-"

"Okay, what was he in a rush for? Sorry," she said hastily, not wanting to upset an already stressed Maggie. "I didn't mean to interrupt you, honest. I'm just - worried. Keith would've gotten back not long after me and I don't want him to get stuck here again."

"Yeah, I can see why. I mean, I hate it here and I've barely been here an hour, I'm sure. How did he stay here for three months without going crazy?"

Belinda stayed silent, her teeth worrying her bottom lip as she tried not to say something Maggie really didn't need to know. She rummaged through her bag, flicking through a book or two, glass clinking as she shuffled things around. She just about had

everything back in her bag when Andrew materialised behind her.

"Ah, you're awake. Keith says 'hello', by the way. He's a little...worried I think. Well, if the yelling was anything to go by. He should really be careful, or he's going to have a heart attack one of these da-"

"Shut up. Just shut up Andrew. Say one more thing and I'm going to smash your face in," Belinda's eyes flashed and her fists clenched. "I swear to God, I'll-"

"Oh, shut up yourself," Andrew muttered, his hands flicking in front of her. Her mouth slammed shut, jarring her teeth and her hands flew to her throat as her breath cut short. "I don't enjoy being yelled at. And you're nothing but an idiot for thinking you could ever take me on. You'd better hope Keith and Jack get here soon or you're going to find that life could be cut a lot shorter."

And with a snap of his fingers, he was gone. Belinda's eyes bugged out of her head as her breathing didn't return before she collapsed to the floor. Maggie let out a cry of dismay as her fingers worked above Belinda in a complicated dance. Suddenly Belinda

started coughing as the air rushed back into her lungs. Maggie leaned in to try and catch what she was saying.

"Th-*cough*-that bas-*cough*cough*-he's going to-*cough*-get what's coming-*cough*cough*-coming to him!" Belinda choked out, her eyes watering and stinging. "I swear-*cough*-"

"Hey, give it a minute Belinda. Give yourself a second to catch your breath back. I'm sure Keith and Jack have an idea to get us back."

"Oh, we won't need their help," Belinda smirked, her eyes glittering as she reopened her bag. "Now that Andrew's gone for the minute, you can help me with our plan..."

* * *

"So, now that we know Andrew has them both," Jack said. "And that they were both taken from here, we can assume they're together, right? And if they're together, Belinda will take care of Maggie. Belinda won't let anything happen to Maggie if she can help it."

"I know that, but who's going to take care of Belinda? She can't take care of herself properly and she's in a totally different world now! If anything happens to her I- it's all my fault."

"Hey, come on. Belinda can find trouble all on her own you know. But she can take care of herself better than you'd think. She didn't use to be able to but she can do more now. And Maggie'll help if it gets really bad, you know that."

Keith shrugged noncommittally. He didn't like the idea of the two of them alone and trapped, helpless against Andrew. Even the fact that Belinda was getting more independent didn't help. His hands shook with the effort of not hitting something. When he got hold of Andrew he would...

"Hello-o-o-o, Earth to Keith? Look, I have to get going. My dad's gonna freak if I'm not home soon. I know you're worried about Belinda but please, don't do anything overly stupid. She can take care of herself for the minute and Maggie's fine if she's with her."

"Fine. Come back tomorrow and we'll work it out, okay? I won't do anything as long as you come over tomorrow."

"That's a good idea," Jack paused at the door, not wanting to leave Keith on his own. "Look, it's going to be fine. It has to be."

Once Jack was gone, Keith tried to pull himself together. It was pointless trying to charge in head first, he might as well try and think of a plan that could save them both and get rid of Andrew at the same time. And then there was explaining how he had managed to lose both Maggie and Belinda on the same day to his mother. He knew she wouldn't be very impressed with him for being so blind and naive.

Chapter 27

I Can't Give Him Up... - Part 27

[OMG!!!! Uni is over for the year and I am (HOPEFULLY) back in business! Oh so many apologies to be made, oh so many people to apologise to. So, here's the final (SQUEEEE) installment of the Keith/Belinda story! I think this is where I'm leaving it, but I don't know how many loose ends there are. Feedback would be good so that I know what I've forgotten to clear up, which might mean another couple of chapters. I honestly have no clue :S. So, Happy Reading! ^_^]

Andrew materialised again in front of Maggie and Belinda hours later. Maggie was asleep on Belinda's lap and Belinda was dozing slightly. Her eyes sprang

open, jumping straight to Andrew's as he strode over to her. She resisted the urge to scream obscenities at him, if only to let Maggie sleep a little longer.

"What, no 'hello'? Don't we know each other well enough now?"

"You creep!" Belinda hissed, her hands balling into fists. She wanted to be able to stay calm no matter what but every time she saw him she felt all reason vacate her head. And then all she could do was bristle against him, every part of her hating him for putting Maggie, Keith, Jack and Gina through this. "Why don't you go jump off a cliff?"

"Because it's a pointless activity. Much as letting you live is. However, if you want to do some cliff jumping, I can oblige. I can take your soul first if you want and then you won't be afraid of the height. Well, I intend to take your soul anyway but I would much prefer to have your permission."

"Oh, don't lie to me. I know you can't take my soul unless I let you and I refuse."

"Fine. But it's only a matter of time before you cave, I know that. You're much too weak to stand up against me."

"Bite me," Belinda murmured, turning back to Maggie. She didn't want to wake her to deal with Andrew. "Look, what do you want? I doubt you came to see me purely because you could. Or are you just here to torment me?"

"Whilst tormenting you is undoubtedly lots of fun, I thought I'd come and see if I could make you any less comfortable."

"I don't think that's possible," Belinda said, her voice flat. "I mean, if you wanted to kill yourself and leave me trapped here, which would be inconvenient for me..."

"Very funny Belinda. How about I kill off your playmate instead?" Andrew suggested menacingly, stepping forward ever so slightly.

"Don't even think about it," Belinda hissed vehemently. She knew she was playing into his hand but she couldn't help the protective surge that always

engulfed her where Maggie was concerned. Her hands balled into fists and she could feel the bite of her own nails digging into her palms.

"Whatever. It's only a matter of time until you're all dead anyway."

As he turned to leave, Maggie's head came up cautiously, her mouth still running through the spell almost silently. Andrew opened the portal, unaware that Maggie's hands were holding a glass vial, the open end pointing towards him. He did, however, hear the last of Maggie's chants, moments too late. His eyes went wide as he was sucked straight into the prison meant just for him. Only his last echoing shriek was left behind, almost startling Maggie into dropping the vial.

"Careful!" Belinda scolded, her hands leaping to steady Maggie's. "Come on, let's blow this joint!"

Maggie and Belinda careened out of the portal, giddy with relief. Neither of them knew where they were but they didn't much care. As the euphoria wound down, however, Belinda tried to take a more practical approach to matters at hand.

"Okay, so do you know where the heck we are?"

"Not a clue," Maggie giggled, still looking around happily. "But hey, we can't be too far from home - look, there's Stacy!"

"Hang on a minute," Belinda muttered slowly. "How on Earth do you know who Stacy is?"

"Oh, um, I kind of maybe saw her in a vision once," Maggie said, sobering slightly. "Talking to Emma. But it didn't seem all that important," she wheedled.

"Oh, whatever. Let's see if she can point us home! Stacy!" She hollered at the figure, her arms waving frantically to grab her attention.

"Belinda?" Stacy shouted, apparently awestruck. "What're you doing here? I thought you were ill!"

"Oh, um," Belinda stuttered, her eyes flicking to Maggie desperately. "I, uh, got a second wind. Decided to take a walk around while I had the chance. But we kind of got lost. Any way you can point me in the right direction?"

"Sure, no problem. Better yet, why don't we call Keith or Jack, get them to pick you up - you don't look so good."

"That would be awesome," Belinda gushed, smiling widely. "Thanks Stace."

"Don't mention it," Stacy said as she dialled. After the extremely short conversation was over - Keith promising to be on his way ASAP - Stacy turned to Belinda, her cheeks colouring as she tried to find words to express what she was thinking. "Look, about the other day. I was out of line, what I said to you. I've been meaning to say something but there never seemed to be a time, or a place. So, I'm really sorry. I didn't know what I was talking about and I should've minded my own business. I just never thought Emma could be so...well, you know. The way she is."

"Hey, no problem. She's your best friend, right? I wouldn't expect you to believe what I said over what she said any way."

"Thanks," Stacy said, the flush that had flooded her cheeks finally subsiding. "Well, looks like your ride's here! I'll catch you at school maybe?"

"Sure! I'd love that," Belinda said warmly, reaching over impulsively for a hug before racing to where Keith was parking his bicycle. "Keith!"

"Belinda, Maggie, thank god! Are you two ok? How- what- when-?"

"It's a long story," Maggie stated, waving to Jack as he hurtled around the corner. "And I, for one, could use a nice long nap. So I'll see you two at home!"

"God, I'm glad you're back," Keith said as Jack rode away with Maggie, after hugging Belinda and apologising profusely for not being there. "I can't believe you're really here."

"Hey, you wouldn't get rid of me that easy," Belinda smiled, her face turning up towards his. "And I think you owe me for breaking out."

"I think I do," Keith said, leaning down toward her. The story could wait for another time. Right now, all

he wanted was to hold his girlfriend and take her home. Which he did. ◀◀

THE END

About the Author

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